



THE SIXPENNY MAGAZINE



1867

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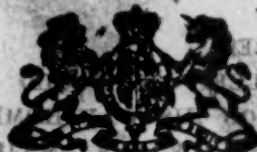
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THE SIXPENNY MAGAZINE.

APRIL 1, 1867.

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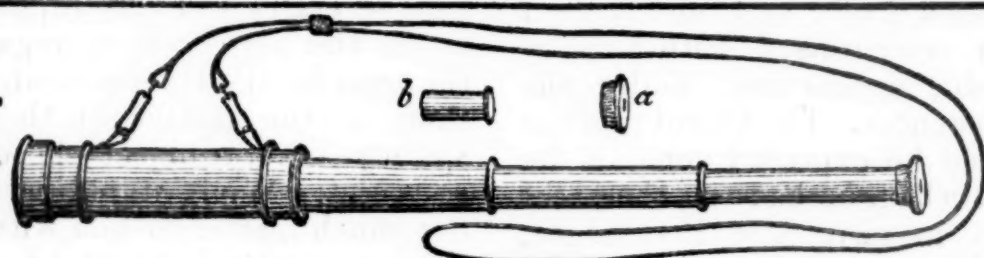
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THE PRISONER:

A STORY OF ROMANTIC LOYALTY IN THE REIGN OF LOUIS XIV.

BY WILLIAM ISAAC KEAY.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLAN OF THE CONSPIRACY.

THE Count was alone at the Cabaret. It was earlier than he would be expected; for, instead of waiting till midnight, he had come away as soon as he had been visited by the gaoler to give him his supper: so he reached the Cabaret before any of his friends could be expected there. The night was dark, which was somewhat favourable for him. It was also stormy, which was likewise favourable; for when he appeared at the door of the Cabaret without any hat upon his head, it was easily guessed that the wind had blown it off; and the landlord readily sympathised with one of his noble appearance, under the circumstances. The Count told the host that he expected some of the friends whom he had met the night before, to visit him that night, or rather, more correctly, on the morning of that same day; and, should any of them come, he gave orders that they should be shown up to him immediately on their arrival. He was then conducted to the same room in which he had before met the conspirators. The landlord showed him the most profound respect, having evidently been instructed by the Abbé regarding him. When he was left alone, he turned at once to the closet, as M. D'Aligne had directed him, and there washed, arrayed himself suitably, and, generally, made such alterations in his appearance that his own gaoler would have failed to recognise him. He found also that the Priest had not forgotten to supply him with money; there was a purse in one of his pockets.

Being thus furnished with all present necessities, he called for a bottle of wine, and sat down to consider his position; for such had

been the hurry and bustle of his life during the last couple of days, compared with the dull monotony of his former existence, that he had not been able to find much leisure for thinking. Now, however, as he had nothing else to do, he betook himself to that employment. He thought of various things; and among others, of his fellow-conspirators; he found himself recalling their features, and endeavouring to form some estimate of their respective characters. With the Priest, he was rather puzzled. He seemed at one time so simple and innocent; at another time so crafty and unscrupulous—as in the conversation regarding the arms for the Government. And then, in the matter of the conspiracy—its true object—he seemed so secret. Well; it did certainly not much matter to him what was the conspirators' aim, if he gained his liberty; which, the Priest correctly stated, could never be secured to him (and he knew far better than the Priest) during the lifetime of Louis XIV. And it was, at all events, a plot tolerably sure of success; for it seemed to have the powerful support of the Jesuits. And then, as to himself; he was evidently expected to do something in forwarding it: he vainly tried to conjecture what part he was intended to play; it was evidently important that he should be among them, or they would not have taken so much trouble. He was plainly intended to be very useful in some way. Well, he would see.

As he had thought of the Priest, his mind turned to the other conspirators; the Beggar came next. The stolid features, almost denoting stupidity, seemed to him, when lighted up by intelligence during his short speech, as if they had been quite familiar, though he

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could not remember where he had seen them. And when he produced the key of the iron gate, he recollected the peculiar look of interest which took possession of the Beggar's face ; it passed away in a moment, but was afterwards occasionally visible, when gazing vacantly (as he was wont), his eye came suddenly in contact with that of the Count, who immediately felt a greater confidence in the outcast mendicant than in any of the other conspirators.

Meditating thus, he sat for a considerable time, and was suddenly aroused from his reverie by the entrance of the Abbé. That reverend personage thought he was first at the Cabaret, having come straight upstairs without speaking to the landlord. Nevertheless, he stepped in calmly, exactly as if he expected what he found. But such was M. D'Aligne's habit ; he never seemed surprised. Had he found the Prince of Darkness in the room, instead of the Count, it is quite probable he would have walked in just as he did, and saluted him respectfully.

M. de Raymond observed the calm manner ; but it did not deceive him. He had made up his mind that it was unnatural—was forced by habit, and was by no means the indication of a clear conscience.

The Abbé, however, gave him little time to pursue these reflections ; for he immediately sat down, and, joining the Count at his wine, proceeded at once to discuss the business for which he had come.

"I gave you my promise," said he, "when we last saw each other, that I would explain to you our whole plans, so far as at present matured. And, as you more particularly belong to the soldiers (as well as being a scion of nobility—an additional requisite), I shall begin with our plans as regards the military.

"Your father served in the army with distinction, and was a favourite with Richelieu, and, some said, also of the King ; at all events, after Richelieu, he was never employed by Mazarin on any special business,

and was said to be devoted to his Majesty. Then, after Mazarin's death, when the King took the Government into his own hands, your father was entrusted with some diplomatic mission of a secret nature, to Holland. What was the object of that mission I am not aware : it is of no consequence. It is sufficient to know, that the Count, your father, did not conduct it to his Majesty's satisfaction. He ventured, I believe, to think for himself on some points on which he was instructed to treat, and preferred to tell the truth, rather than stoop to some equivocation which his majesty had been pleased to recommend. The wrath of Louis was terrible when your father told him all ; and that wrath was rendered more terrible when, the King having reproved him for not acting strictly up to his instructions, he made himself greater in mind than his sovereign, by stating that, whatever a king might choose to do, he, as a gentleman of France, would have felt himself degraded by following such instructions ; and that, if kings must be liars, he thought they should tell their falsehoods for themselves."

"And was he imprisoned?" asked the Count, eagerly.

No : that was a marvel ; but your father was so popular with all classes, and more particularly with the army, that his Majesty probably feared some insurrection among the soldiers, had he taken such a step ; so he merely ordered him to retire from the court, and reside on his estate until recalled ; and gave him five hours to quit the capital. Under these circumstances, your father hastened to his wife, took a hurried farewell, making arrangements for her following him as soon as possible, started for his estate, and was never more heard of. Some supposed that the King had only ordered him to quit the court as a blind, and that he was afterwards secretly arrested. In consequence of a report to this effect getting abroad, a number of your father's friends—almost amounting to a

mob—proceeded to the Bastile with violent intentions, and were only pacified when the Governor solemnly declared that he was not within the walls of that prison. Doubtless, there were other prisons in France in which he might have been placed; but the idea of his having been arrested gradually lost ground; more especially as it was reported that his Majesty expressed much astonishment on learning of his disappearance. It was therefore supposed that your father, feeling himself condemned to perpetual disgrace in the eyes of his countrymen, or at all events to inactivity ill-suited to the ideas of so old a soldier, had betaken himself to foreign service and been slain. At any rate, nothing has been heard of him since; and his widow has long spoken of him as dead. It is a melancholy story; and who, but the cause of your own misfortunes, was the cause of his?"

This narrative affected the Count deeply. Though he had again begun to hold intercourse with the outer world, he still carried about with him a certain prison feeling of loneliness, and had almost forgot that his parents might yet be alive; but the Abbé's slight allusion to his mother at once arrested his attention; he was recalled to a consciousness of the fact, that he was still a social being like other men, that he had relations who cared for him, and also that *he* cared for *them*. Before allowing the priest to proceed any farther, therefore, he obtained from him information as to what part of the city his mother lived in. This M. D'Aligne readily gave him, though he cautioned him in the meantime not to attempt visiting her. He then proceeded as follows:—

"I have digressed a little to tell you of your father's distinguished services and misfortunes, by way of introducing your own connection and influence with the military, as well as to put you in possession of facts with which (as they happened since your own

imprisonment), you could have no means of becoming acquainted. I come now to yourself. *You* also served the King; and that you were once his favourite there can be no doubt, though how you lost that favour, *you* may know, *but I do not know*, nor have I ever come across any one who *did*. If your father was popular, *you* were doubly so—at least, among the soldiers; and although, at this distance of time, you may suppose they have forgotten you, it is a gross mistake. Your name is not often mentioned among them now, and when it is, it is not spoken loudly; but there is yet in their hearts a chivalrous feeling for you that makes them defend your name from the suspicion of treason that is sometimes cast upon it by the malevolent, or the thoughtless. Of this I lately convinced myself, about the time of my begging your liberty from the King. And I am certain, that, among the portion of the soldiery that is already well inclined to our cause, your appearance would be hailed with enthusiasm. And if your history were cautiously and properly told to others not yet influenced in our favour, I doubt not but it would make a large addition to our friends in the army. For this purpose arrangements must be made, and fitting time chosen; and, should an occasion conveniently offer, you could even witness the effect in person, so disguised as to avoid all risk of discovery or recognition.

"Our design is to have such a number of soldiers join us openly at first as shall inspire the rest of the army with confidence sufficient to urge their coming forward when the proper time comes; for the great majority of them are, even now, discontented enough for rebellion, and if there is such a probability of success as to give them courage to join us, we are sure of them.

"When the night is fixed for the —final stroke (the Abbé hesitated a moment for a mild enough word) we shall have an hour fixed, at

which our select band of soldiers shall assemble, just in time to come up to the palace immediately after we, by the chosen band of our beggar-confederate, shall have struck the blow; and France shall have soldiers waiting outside; you shall then appear conspicuous: we shall cry, 'The Count de Raymond, our General.' The soldiers, our chosen band, shall re-echo the shout; and the soldiers, not our chosen band, but the army of France, shall, keen for active service and adventure, rush to our standards; and France shall have soldiers enough ready to restrain the feelings of any inconveniently loyal persons who may rashly appear when Louis is no longer sovereign.

"Of course we shall previously prepare the minds of our own band for your appearance; but for the present it will be safest only to give out that there is a plan for your certain escape on the evening in question, and not to have it supposed that you are now in the enjoyment of any sort of liberty, as that might be somewhat dangerous.

"So much for the soldiers."

Here the Abbé digressed for a little, to tell M. de Raymond the original causes of disaffection among the soldiers, which naturally led to making a similar revelation regarding the other classes principally concerned in the proposed rebellion. And here the modesty of the Priest must seem remarkable, inasmuch as he explained to the Count the causes of ill-feeling towards his Majesty's Government in each case as something that had come about in the ordinary course of things; and did not give M. de Raymond an opportunity of admiring his talents, by informing him that the whole was brought about by his own clever, though fiendish, management. He had the discernment to perceive so much of his companion's character, as led him to infer that villany was by no means his natural element, and that the discovery of too much baseness might disgust him with the project, and make even the

security of his freedom seem too small a boon to be won at such a price. The Abbé, therefore, gave, as we have said, a simple account of what occurred, without letting it be known that he was even aware how these things came about. Having made these garbled explanations, he proceeded.

"It has been agreed among a certain company of merchants that they shall form an armed band among themselves to assist us: it will be led on by M. Antoin Roussy, the merchant whom you met here. They are to assemble in the residences of those who happen to have houses or places of business nearest the palace; and they are to assemble, four only in one house, so as not to draw public attention to their movements. At a signal (to be yet fixed on) from the palace-roof, that all is over, they are to sally forth, and form into order, in such a position as may be deemed most effective.

"There is but one other company that I need mention to you, and that is the Beggars. Where their chief intends them to assemble, I know not; but I am yet to be satisfied of the advantageous nature of their position, before final arrangements are made. They are also to be furnished with arms: the merchant supplies these, you know.

"Of the Priests, whose proper weapon unless on extraordinary occasions, is not the sword, none, save myself, shall take open part in the matter; but many shall be the prayer offered up for our success proceeding from those whose cloaks often hide as brave hearts as are to be found beneath a breast-plate."

"And is the king to be killed?" asked the Count.

"It is so wished by most of my brethren in this work; but if you can persuade the others to consent to remote imprisonment, I shall agree with pleasure, indeed. The shedding of blood was never my proposal, and I had much rather avoid it."

As he spoke, the Priest put on

his most benevolent countenance; which, however, was quite lost on the Count, owing to the tumultuous working of his own feelings; for the memory of his old wrongs roused his passions, and pointed to revenge; so, waving his hand, he muttered, "LET HIM DIE."

CHAPTER X.

THE ABBÉ AND THE COUNT VISIT AT THE SAME HOUSE, AND THE LATTER BEGINS TO THINK OF "TAKING CARE" OF HIMSELF.

Let him die! The words were pronounced slowly—deliberately; and how pleased was the Abbé when he heard them uttered. He knew a loyal countenance when he saw one; and when first he beheld Pierre de Raymond, he recognised a loyal face,—open, upright, and tending to virtue. He had, therefore, been fully prepared to encounter opposition when he hinted at the probability of the King being assassinated; and though he *did* think that a captive of so many years would not be particular as to the conditions on which he got his liberty, yet he was not prepared for such a ready acquiescence as he had received, and he was himself the cause of that hearty assent. When he first came into the room and accosted the Count, had he asked the question, he would most probably have received no such favourable reply; but he acted craftily: with the avowed object of opening up the conspirators' plans to the Count, he began with an account of the persecutions of M. de Raymond's own father, which, wonderful for him, were not in the least exaggerated, followed up that with an allusion to the Count's own misfortune; and wound up with a slight but covert appeal to his filial affection; and the work was done. It was no longer the crafty, unscrupulous Abbé who spoke, it was a meek, benevolent priest, bewailing the misfortunes of others, and proposing to alleviate the sufferings of an afflicted country by a change of Government.

But, in his cell that night, the lonely captive felt no comfort in the thought that he had thus condemned his King. He remembered his early instructions,—the stories which his mother used to tell him, of the adventurous loyalty of his ancestors. And would he be the first to stain the hitherto spotless page of their history! But then they might easily, in the sunshine of royal favour, be loyal; or they might, like his father, be banished the court, and still be loyal; but to have served a king, and yet have liberty taken away, and still be loyal! No; that was not in nature. Thus did the prisoner justify the act of treachery as necessary for his own defence, as it were; and surely, he thought besides, the man must be indeed a tyrant whom, as the Priest had shown him, all classes of the people wished to dethrone. But still he shrunk from shedding his blood, and felt fully persuaded that, if he could have been made certain of liberty without the treachery, he would much have preferred it. He certainly pitied the King; and he thought, too, that if he could but gain admission to the royal presence, he would trust to his own eloquence to get his full pardon; for the King was at heart benevolent, or at least the Count remembered he used to be so; and he reasoned, "Were it not for the selfish fear of his reputation being injured by my tongue, I doubt not but long ago I should have been set free." But how was the prisoner to get access to the King? It seemed almost hopeless. He must appear, or get admittance at least, in the character of some one else: or how otherwise could he pass the lackeys and attendants? Here he suddenly called to mind that his father had been employed to look over the building of some additions to the palace—indeed to that part of it in which the King's private apartments were; now these plans were likely in his mother's possession still, as his father was the designer

of most of the alterations. Now, the Count thought that, if he could gain possession of these plans, perhaps by studying them, and thereby acquainting himself with the passages and other intricacies of that part of the palace, he might be able to bring his visit to the King more within the range of probability; so he determined to see his mother on the morrow; howbeit, it must be in disguise, as the Priest had suggested the propriety of no one knowing of his existence at present, except as a prisoner in the Bastille, and he had acquiesced in the arrangement. Somewhat quieted in mind by the thought of thus probably averting the necessity for treason, the prisoner fell asleep.

Calm and deep was his repose; he slept so far on into the day that, when the gaoler and inspector paid their morning visit, they found him asleep; and they wondered that he should sleep so long and so soundly: however, they left him undisturbed. He awoke, therefore, when he felt disposed, and that was only for the purpose of taking the food awaiting him, of which he stood much in need, and then to sleep again. And he was very wise thus to refresh himself against the period of his work; and that was not until the evening, when he went to visit his mother. Let him sleep on till then, and let us look after some of the other conspirators.

The Priest left his convent for the city late in the afternoon of the day on which the prisoner slept so soundly. He gave a slight notice of where he was going; he was going to visit a widow. And this was no mere pretence, no hollow blind—it was the fact. He was going on business of which he needed not to feel ashamed, which naturally came in the way of his clerical duty, and which, therefore, he did not try to conceal. The widow he was to visit was Madame la Comtesse de Raymond, the prisoner's mother.

In a rather secluded part of the city, where numbers of the quieter-

living nobility at this time resided, was the house which had for many years been the city residence of the Raymond family; and it was still occupied by the Countess. She was a lady of sixty years or so, with nothing remarkable about her personal appearance, unless it were a very decided look of nobility: noble was written on her face, and loyal-noble; but, indeed there can be no true nobility without loyalty. At this time she was somewhat out of date, this Countess. After the imprisonment of her son, and the disappearance of her husband, she had ceased to care for the fashions and changes of this fickle world. She still lived; but it was in a dreamy, careless manner, as if the world concerned her not. She held no intercourse with it; and it—the kind, accommodating world—in its turn let her alone. It was, therefore, a rather unusual occurrence in her monotonous life, that a visitor should be announced—a priest, the attendant had said. He was ushered in, and made a most humble obeisance. The sleek Abbé had almost a youthful appearance when he was smartly arrayed, as on this occasion; for although, no doubt, as a true son of the Church, M. D'Aligne had long ago renounced the world and its vanities, yet he had remembered, and now resumed a few of its decencies and courtesies when about to visit a lady of distinction. He knew how much her sex are guided, and often misled, by appearance, and had therefore studied to attire his outward man as becomingly as possible; and with his most benevolent, affable, and innocent style, he, almost, at first sight, won the heart of the long-secluded Countess. When he spoke it was with a soft and mellow voice.

"I crave pardon, Madame la Comtesse, in that I have somewhat abruptly intruded upon you. You will excuse me, however, when I say that I am the bearer of good tidings——"

"Good tidings!" cried the Countess, suddenly starting. "Is

my hus—— Is my son——? Pardon me: excuse my agitation. Good news has long been a stranger to me. Explain yourself quickly!"

The Priest regarded her with a peculiar, scrutinising look when she had begun to speak of her husband; but speedily resuming his innocent and simple appearance, he continued:

"Of your husband's fate, dear madame, I am sorry I can give you no news; but concerning your son, I can give you hopes."

"Hopes! Oh, do not let me be any longer mocked with hopes! Let it be certainties: life or death—the axe or liberty; but I have already been too often tantalised with hopes——"

"When I said 'hopes,' madame," (the Abbé spoke in a soft, soothing tone,) "I did not mean that we had not confidence almost amounting to certainties; but as nothing in this changing world can be looked up as secure until accomplished, I used a becomingly cautious expression. We are desirous of having your son liberated from the Bastile, in which, you are aware, he is now confined; and for that purpose I desire your assistance."

"Oh, certainly. You will require money to carry out the operations: name the sum necessary, and if ——"

"You mistake, Madame: for the act of Christian duty which I have it in my power to do your son, I look for no reward, till I shall receive one in heaven; and any expense connected with the matter is so trifling as to be unworthy of mention. What I mean I shall shortly explain. In the first place, you must say nothing to any person about expecting your son's liberty: wait patiently till he is restored to you, towards which my poor efforts shall not be wanting. In the second place, you can render me active assistance. You have doubtless heard your late husband, whom God assoil—here the priest devoutly crossed himself—"recount some of the deeds of his ancestors, and you

can no doubt tell me if his family have any written account of his genealogy, and the great deeds which his ancestors are famed to have done for France and her kings. Now, if I can, from such family records, be enabled to come at an accurate knowledge of the outs and ins of your son's family history for many generations; and if I can have it satisfactorily proved, when brought under his Majesty's notice, that the Raymond family have served the crown—often at great hazard to themselves—for several successive generations, it cannot fail to have a favourable effect upon the King's mind; and I have no doubt but, by a prudent management of the facts, he might be induced to grant a free pardon to your son. Do not suppose, however, that such is our only resource. By no means. We try loyal means first; but should that plan fail, we have another certain method, by which we shall be able to effect his escape from prison and from Paris. These measures, however, will, I sincerely hope, be rendered unnecessary."

"That there are some such records," replied the Countess, "I am pretty certain; but all my husband's papers have lain untouched since his melancholy disappearance from among us. I shall look and see, however, if you can wait." Then, after a short pause, during which she seemed to be considering, Madame de Raymond continued—"Perhaps you could call towards evening, or else send some trusty messenger at that time. I shall give him such papers as I may be able to find. I need not request you to be careful of their custody, as they have a priceless value to me. For your efforts on my son's behalf, accept a widow's grateful thanks; and if you don't succeed, it shall not be for want of his mother's prayers."

The Priest rose, and, with a profound bow (which, from the raising of his one hand, was also meant for an easy sort of benediction), he took his departure.

The Countess de Raymond, as we

have seen, readily acceded to the Priest's request regarding the family papers, necessary, as was represented to her, for her son being honourably restored to liberty; and it was a well-chosen ruse of the Abbé's, that idea of the use to which he was to put the papers, for otherwise the demand might not have been complied with. The reason that the Abbé mentioned that use was simply because no other plausible pretext for desiring possession of them struck him as possible to be pled. And, after he had left the Countess, by a peculiar process of reasoning, M. D'Aligne convinced himself that he had told the truth. For he did wish the papers to aid in the Count's escape, as he could not be held escaped yet, seeing the moment it was known he was out of prison he would be immediately re-captured. And further, it was to assist in the Count's gaining his liberty honourably; for although it was certainly treason at present, yet, if it succeeded, it would be perfectly honourable; for it was the world's code in the Abbé's time, as now, that success is the greatest virtue, changing crime into heroism, vice into virtue, murder and treason into philanthropy and patriotism.

The Countess, on her part, had no doubt of the propriety of giving up, or trusting her whole fortune, if necessary, into the hands of so worthy and benevolent a priest. Her life had, within the last few moments, received a new impulse; the feelings of a mother were revived in her, for she had the prospect of embracing her long-lost son. Moreover, she had herself the pleasure of doing something towards this re-union; for she was to furnish the papers. Meditating in some such strain as the above, she went into another apartment, or rather a small closet, which opened off that in which she had received the Abbé. And this was rather a mysterious closet; it had the reputation of being haunted. It was stated in tradition that some enemy of the French government had once re-

ceived shelter from an ancient Raymond, and was put into this closet for security against surprise. In the morning it was empty: no one knew what had become of him. Since then it was a chamber into which no servant of the house loved to enter; and of late years it had been locked, no one ever entering it except Madame herself, and it was supposed she went there to look at some of the old family portraits which hung there. The servants certainly wondered at her choice of a place for the pictures, and thought she might have had them removed, for the place was undoubtedly haunted. A maid of the Countess's once slept in a chamber close to it, and solemnly declared that she had heard some one pacing up and down all the night long. She was removed from that chamber, and it had since remained unoccupied and locked like the haunted one.

Madame de Raymond had at least chosen a secure retreat for her meditation: she was safe from interruption there. And she stayed there till the evening shadows began to come over the city; and her servants marvelled. For, when all was dark, lights were brought up to the still empty chamber; and the servant who set them down, with the quickness of menial ears, detected the sounds coming from the haunted closet; and it speedily went round the circle of domestics, that the Countess must be in trouble, for she was praying in the haunted room.

Madame had not long returned from her retirement when she was informed that a stranger desired to see her; and remembering that she had promised to have the papers ready for that evening, she supposed it was probably the Priest's messenger. He entered. If he were a messenger, at least he was no menial: and if he wished to be supposed one, he was but bad at feigning. His step was like that of a prince, or a general after a victory; his salutation was that of a courtier who happened to be sincere. He was much hidden, as

to his face, by the collar of his cloak, and also by the manner in which the wind had blown his hair about it; and as to his figure, by the cloak itself; yet his carriage was so graceful that it would at once have led to favourable surmises with regard to the rest. Immediately after his bow to the Countess, he began:

"A stranger, madame, should always crave pardon for intrusion, and more especially at so late an hour; the nature of my business must be my excuse. I came on behalf of your son who has been many years in the Bastile, having the honour to be connected with those who are busily engaged planning his liberation; and there are some papers in your possession which might expedite it, or at least simplify the matter——"

"Oh, monsieur," interrupted Madame de Raymond, "you are the priest's messenger. He certainly spoke of sending for the papers; but I thought he meant to have sent a servant, and could not, therefore, suppose you his messenger, as, from your distinguished bearing, it was evident enough you did not act in that capacity."

"Ah," thought the visitor, "the Priest has been here: what can he want with the papers? I must have them, however, and quickly too, in case the real messenger should arrive." He replied at once, "The Priest, madame, is one to whom I am under great obligations; indeed, I may inform you that I was once in the Bastile myself; and after I had recovered my liberty, without his exertions, I discovered that he had been anxiously seeking to compass the same end. Anything, therefore, that I can do to assist him shall be done without grudging; and, indeed, in matters of this delicate nature, ordinary messengers, such as servants, are scarcely the persons whom we wish to trust, if we can better arrange: in the present case, I trust you will consider me a sufficiently responsible messenger to guarantee the safety of the papers."

"Oh, yes, monsieur; it is so much more agreeable for me to know that there is not the slightest chance of these miscarrying; and the reverend priest has showed his superior discretion in requesting a gentleman to take charge of them; for which delicate courtesy, as well as for all his exertions in this matter, I beg you will entreat him again to accept a mother's thanks. And yourself, also, I trust, will believe that I am deeply grateful to you all for the interest you take in my poor son. May God bless you all, and prosper you!"

As she spoke, the tears glistened in her eye. She rose up, and walked towards the door of the closet: she opened it; and, informing the stranger that she would bring him the papers immediately, she disappeared into the haunted chamber. As she retired, the visitor seemed strangely affected. Calm and unconcerned as he had seemed during the interview, when her eyes were upon him, the moment she turned about, he fixed his eyes lovingly—affectionately—on the receding form; no wonder, it was her son who looked upon his mother.

When she was gone, he had full time to wish her back again before she came. There were low voices in the closet, and they seemed to be arguing; and it seemed that one was the voice of a man. At last, however, when the Count's patience was about exhausted, Madame reappeared bearing a load of parchments, somewhat old-looking. "These," said she, "are all the genealogical papers which I can discover; in them you will find an account of the principal exploits of the family, from every remote period."

"Ah, then, thought the Count, it was only genealogical papers the Priest wanted! however, I must have what I want too. Courage! So, having taken what Madame had brought, with a low bow, he said, as if suddenly recollecting—"Ah! I had almost forgot to ask also if you would kindly look for certain

plans of the Bastile, supposed to be in your possession. It might be desirable for us to have them. For, as a last resource, we may be obliged to have the Bastile secretly entered; and we would therefore require to be acquainted with its interior. I regret to trouble you so much, Madame; but, if you will kindly give me any papers which look like plans, I shall save you all further annoyance, by myself picking out what we require from among them."

It was a bold stroke, and, perhaps, in some respects, a foolish one. The mention of the Bastile plans was, of course, a mere pretence to get hold of any plans which were to be found; he knowing that the Palace plans were the only documents of that sort likely to be in his mother's possession, which he was, therefore, sure of getting. Had he mentioned plans of the Palace, he felt it would have seemed suspicious, and would have suggested treason to his own loyal mind; he judged his mother by himself, and thus made no mention of them. Nevertheless, for all his manœvering, the Count might have missed his aim, but that a certain old and feeble form was standing inside of the door of the haunted room—which Madame de Raymond left somewhat open—and that that old man was listening to all that passed. He knew the Count, and was willing to trust him; so he rather inclined to risk the betrayal of a certain secret—his own existence there, which he did by calling out "Give him them all!"

Madame de Raymond started at the voice, it being unexpected; and the Count started slightly from a different cause—from surprise—he *knew the voice*.

The Countess went again into the chamber, and shortly returned with numerous parchments, over which M. de Raymond looked hastily; snatched out from them the designs he wanted, and taking also the genealogical records, he saluted the Countess somewhat hurriedly, and took his leave.

As he went out at the street door of the Hotel de Raymond, he recognised the manufacturer of his key to the Bastile-gate, but that individual did not seem to notice him. As the Count saw him about to seek admittance at the same door he had himself just quitted, he accosted him in a feigned voice.

"Are you the Abbé's messenger?"

"What Abbé, monsieur?"

"The right reverend Abbé D'Aligne, superior of the Monastery of Saint —"

"Yes, monsieur, his messenger."

"Then give him these," and the Count handed him the genealogical papers, reserving the others. And then each departed on his own way, and each had got his own, and M. de Raymond thought—nobody any the wiser.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COUNT MAKES DISCOVERIES.

THE Count hurried away as fast as he could, but not to the Cabarat St. Antoin: he made his way to a place of even meaner pretensions than that unpretending tavern. This place he had selected on account of its retired situation (for it was in a very quiet street), as also for its unassuming and humble appearance; because security from observation was all he wanted: not only security from apprehension, in case such a thing should happen as his being recognised by unfriendly eyes, but also security from the observation of the Abbé and company; for now he was about to begin his own little private game, and he wished to be able to carry on his operations without the chances of detection which existed if he remained subject to the reverend espionage. Having gained his apartment, he proceeded to examine his parchment treasures. These consisted of plans of various additions and alterations made in the palace at various times, some of them were very old, others of a more recent, and some even of modern date. With these last M. de Raymond began. He went over

them carefully to see if he could make out the position of his Majesty's private audience chamber—the favourite closet of retirement in which we found him at the opening of this story. After a long and anxious search he came to the plan of the chamber he sought for. He then set himself to study the different passages which led to the ante-room immediately adjoining that chamber; he next set about tracing these passages to the grand staircase; but here he found himself at fault, that staircase being in the main building, and therefore not to be found in the plans of the after-additions: however, his early recollections came to his assistance, and he thought, from the indications given in the plans, he could pretty well determine where these passages communicated with the main entrance to the palace. Having looked over those plans which were most modern, and therefore the only ones likely to be of much use to him, he was about to lay them aside for that night, intending to study them more at leisure on a future occasion, when it suddenly struck him that one of the oldest plans, on which he happened to cast his eye, very remarkably resembled the more modern one which he had been just consulting: and, on comparing the two, he found that the private chamber of the King was so old as to be contained in a plan at least dating several reigns back. On examining more minutely he found that the old plan contained a marginal note of considerable length. On looking at the note he gave a look of surprise, and in a low voice, read as follows:—"SECRET PASSAGE. — Connected with this chamber is a passage, so old that its original intention is unknown: it is presumed to have been an avenue leading from a monastery, which formerly occupied part of this site; and by his Majesty's special directions an entrance into this passage was preserved in this chamber (No. 35 in design). The door or entrance is situated in the western wall of the chamber, nine feet south of the

door. The wall is lined with carved wood, and the door is a panel the same as the rest. To prevent any difference of sound from the other panels, in case of its being struck, a large stone has been cunningly fixed on behind, so as to swing with the door, which is not easily opened from the inside—only yielding on the thumb being pressed very hard upon a knot in the centre. The passage proceeds into the thick front wall of the ante-chamber (34), and continues to slope gently down, inside that wall, till it gets below ground, whence in a little it as gradually ascends, and terminates in the fifth pillar in front of the old church of St. Magdalen. The moveable stone in this pillar has no spring to open it, but simply revolves from right to left, on the application of heavy pressure. This pillar, like the rest, appears, from the exterior, to be made up of various small columns run together. One of these small ones works upon an axis, and being oval, not round, when it has performed a quarter of a revolution, there is an open space left through which a person can pretty easily pass."

The Count read the above aloud, by way of giving vent to his surprise at finding *that* in the plans which so far exceeded his expectations; he searched merely in hopes of finding out, and making himself acquainted with the intricacies of the palace—for his memory retained but few traces of his former knowledge of its interior; and, besides, the King's apartments for private use were now in a different part of the palace from that in which they were at the period of his recollection,—which, of course, had created a corresponding alteration in the apartments allotted to many of the royal household. What these changes were he was not fully aware: indeed, it was only accidentally that he had become cognisant of the locality of the chamber used at present by his Majesty as a private audience-room, and that by a casual remark of M. D'Aligne's, in one of the conversations regard-

ing the plot. But now, seeing that he was in possession of a way of entrance into the palace whenever he chose, he must consider how, and to what purpose, he could best avail himself of that access. In the meantime, he deposited the parchments in a secure place, intending to return to his cell for that night, and to occupy his mind next morning with considering the best mode of procedure.

Going down stairs, he was met by the landlord, who obsequiously hoped he found the accommodation to his mind, and went out before him to open the door. As he did so, a figure passed hurriedly by, attired in a long cloak of various colours, and a hood on its head;—the hood was red. The figure passed the door so quickly that it startled the Count as much as if he had seen an apparition. He looked out after it, and saw it moving on, still at the same rapid pace, till, turning a corner, it was hid from him.

"Who is that, in such strange attire?"

"The Sorcerer," replied the landlord. "It is evident your lordship has but newly come to Paris, else you would know him."

"Well, friend; but I have not walked the streets of your city for about twenty years—till within a few days. I know scarcely anything about Paris. I may almost call myself a stranger. So *you* tell me, Who is the Sorcerer?"

"Who is he?" repeated the landlord, apparently not exactly comprehending the question.

"Yes. Who is he? Is he a Frenchman? If so, what is his name? When did he appear first in Paris? In short, what do you know about him?"

"I know little enough about him, my lord; and I suppose the less any one knows about him, so much the better for his soul."

"Why, friend, you surprise me. Just a moment ago you wondered that I did not know about him; and it seems, after all, you are nearly as ignorant as myself."

"Ah, my lord, I only ventured

humbly to express surprise that your lordship should not have known him by sight, as every one does. Anything else about him I do not know, and there is no one else does."

"When did he come to Paris?"

"Not very long since—perhaps not more than a year; and no one knew where he came from. He just started up, as it seemed—was first noticed at the corner of a street, and for a few days afterwards all Paris wondered. At length it came out who he was, and what he was. Some of the priests wanted him to be burned, or at least banished, but the King would not hear of it. Some said his Majesty went privately and consulted him. This was certainly done by many of the nobility; and they say that he's a wonderful prophet. All that he says comes true."

"I perceive I must consult him myself, if I wish to know anything about him," said the Count, in a merry tone; and I really have some curiosity."

"I trust your lordship is not in earnest," said the landlord, with a frightened look. "Surely you do not suspect who he is?"

"Who is he? I thought you did not know."

"Oh, well, you know, some say he is a Frenchman, and that his name is Robert Lurette, and that he was once a chemist in this city; others, that he is an Italian, named Adrian di Bosco, and that he was banished his native country for murdering a priest; but I think, and so do most people now, that he is——" Here the landlord paused, and looked carefully up and down the street.

"Well?" said the Count.

"That he is—Satan himself." Here he crossed himself devoutly.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the Count. The host was evidently astonished at his merriment. But the Count was not at all superstitious; and this was the result of his long solitary confinement. Upon a weak mind, this might have had an effect exactly

opposite; it might have made the prisoner painfully nervous and fanciful; but in his case, the effect had been to give him a complete confidence in, and reliance upon, an omnipotent, all-protecting Providence, and thereby caused him to deride and disbelieve all the commonly held opinions of that age, regarding the power of mankind's enemy to do him evil, and to take human shapes for that purpose. The Count's conviction on these points was brought about by a course of reasoning very simple and conclusive. Had he expressed it in words, it would have been much as follows:—"Apparitions, ghosts, evil spirits, &c., are said to choose places of solitude and darkness for their visitations. I have passed a good half-lifetime in solitude, and the nights of that time in darkness; I have never been visited by a ghost, an apparition, or an evil spirit; therefore, I naturally suppose—if they did not visit me during so long a period, with such excellent opportunities—I am fully justified in disbelieving and denying their existence." Hence he could afford to laugh; and in that respect, he was, perhaps, in advance of the age in which he lived; for there were not many in France that night who, at that hour, and in such circumstances, would have laughed with him.

Having finished his merriment, he waved a majestic adieu to his bewildered landlord, and went up the street in the same direction as the Sorcerer had gone. As that mysterious personage was out of sight, however, he turned, and took another direction, evidently having something in view which he wished to do quickly. He hastened on, up streets and down lanes, occasionally pausing to consider, then on again as before, till he stopped before a very ancient-looking chapel. It was that of St. Magdalene. He had a sort of desire to set his mind at ease by exploring the passage that night, in case it might have been altered or built up, if its existence had been discovered. Considering, however,

the very long time since that addition to the palace was built, and the changes which had taken place in its internal arrangement since then, it was questionable if any one knew of the passage, more especially as its existence was never intended to be known to many persons; the King, who caused it to be built, no doubt meaning to use it for secret purposes—when he required to leave the palace, and did not wish it known that he had done so. "*The fifth pillar*," said the Count; and he set himself to discover it. Now there were nine; so that, counting from either side, the middle one was the fifth. It was just like the rest; and they were all large and massive. "If it revolves from right to left from the inside, it must be from left to right from the outside," again murmured he, trying all the small flattened columns of which it was composed one by one. The pillar yielded, and he was inside. He closed the opening. Now, as he was provided with no light of any description, he was obliged to grope in the dark, and so he did. The place had a cold, damp, disagreeable odour: and no wonder. How many years was it since that passage was opened! However, he had no time to be fastidious. He moved on and on—cautiously, but still with as much haste as the darkness and his ignorance of the way permitted. He had ceased to go downward, and was sensible that he had begun to ascend. He therefore concluded that, according to the description in the plans, he could not be far from the end of his dark journey. He accordingly went more cautiously and deliberately, feeling along both sides of the passage as he went, besides ever and anon stretching out his hands before him. Presently he was brought to a stand; he had come to the termination of the way. He felt a cold slab before him. And here he began to remember that he had no directions how to open the door from the outside of the chamber; but as it was distinctly stated that the door was not easy

to open from inside the chamber, he conjectured it might be a very simple process from the side of the door on which he then was. And such proved to be the case; for a very large handle turned easily round—the hinges creaked slightly—and he saw light through the curtains, which, being closed, concealed the apartment from his view. How quickly his heart beat, as he put his hand to the drapery, and softly peeped through.

He saw the favourite sanctuary of Louis XIV.; but Louis was not there: his Majesty had already retired for the night; and two lacqueys were seated in his chamber. When the Count first caught sight of them, they were both silent, and one was looking somewhat frightened. The one was a very old man; the other a very young one. It was the latter who seemed startled; and listening attentively for some moments, he at length broke silence.

"What a very strange noise!"

"Paul, Paul, you are nervous; you have not recovered your last night's carouse. There was no noise at all that I heard."

"No noise! I tell you there was a very great noise—a very peculiar noise, too; like a gate creaking."

"A gate! why they'll be shutting the gates; that's nothing extraordinary. I suppose they shut the gates every night, and they creak every night, although we don't always happen to hear them. So there's nothing extraordinary in that. By St. Peter! how pale you are! your colour's quite gone! And what a thing to grow pale at—the creaking of a gate! Oh, Paul, Paul, get thee to bed, and dream of thy mistress; and pray that she be not so timid as thou. Ha! ha! ha! the cr-r-reaking of a gate!" and the old man laughed at his own slender wit.

"When I was a boy," he continued, "in the days of Richelieu, there was sometimes a thing or two to take away one's colour, I can tell you, though *you* couldn't have stood it. I served in the army for—let me see—"

"Oh, I remember all about that; your memory's getting worse and worse daily. I'm sure you've told me the story of your victories, and wounds, and so on ever since I was a boy. Your memory is now as bad as your hearing; though I did not think you'd been so deaf as you are, not to hear a noise like *that*. The creaking of the palace-gates was not the thing I heard: it was not the creaking of an ordinary gate; it sounded so very near too, that I could almost have sworn it was in this very room."

"Ah!" cried the elder of the two, suddenly. "Then, if that isn't a rat; a rat in the palace! dear me, what will the Queen say? and she is so frightened for rats. Ha! ha! ha! Paul," and the old domestic fairly roared with laughter. "I see it all now; it was a rat that frightened you—a rat! that's much better yet: the creaking of a gate was nothing to that—a *rat*! What'll they say, Paul, when I tell them you were frightened by a rat! Had you been with me at the siege of——"

What siege was here referred to is now a matter of conjecture; for at the moment the old man was to give it a name, he paused in renewed astonishment; for his companion had fairly started to his feet, his mouth open with horror. At the very moment when the exploits of a great siege were about to be narrated, the sound which had formerly startled the young lacquey was repeated, this time much louder, and accompanied by a disagreeable crunching noise, which evidently proceeded from behind the curtains.

The cause of all this was very simple. The Count had just shut the secret panel, on retiring from the apartment, quite satisfied regarding the value of his discovery; and he thought too, perhaps, that these lacqueys had that evening enjoyed the company of a rat more than they were aware of.

There was another subject which undoubtedly occupied his thoughts, and that was, the creaking of the gate. He resolved to take an early

opportunity of oiling the hinges, and that before paying his Sovereign a visit through it. And this resolution must be commended by the historian, as evincing a proper consideration for his Majesty's nerves.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COUNT SOMEWHAT UNEXPECTEDLY MEETS WITH ACQUAINTANCES, AND FINDS HIMSELF OBLIGED TO BARGAIN WITH THEM.

WHILE the Count was pursuing his investigations in the manner described in the previous chapter, certain persons were seeking him; and—as was by no means wonderful, considering where he was—they could not find him, whereat they marvelled. To explain who they were that sought him, and why, we must go back a little in the evening (or rather night) on which the Count had managed to acquire a knowledge of that secret passage which he was investigating while they sought him.

When the Abbé's messenger delivered the papers to his master, he did not fail to tell him how he got them; that he was confident, notwithstanding the attempt to disguise both voice and manner, that it was no other than M. de Raymond who gave him them; and further, that he had observed the Count did not give him all the papers in his possession, but hastily secreted some of them about his person. These things annoyed M. D'Aligne; and he was determined to discover, and, if possible, gain possession of whatever he had kept back. The business was surrounded with difficulties: he was at a loss how to proceed.

In the first place, various circumstances led him to suspect that his messenger had mistaken the person who gave him the papers. For, seeing that it was long before midnight when this supposed Count was met with, and as it was not the prisoner's habit to leave the Bastille earlier, it seemed un-

likely that he could have been out then. On the other hand, again, it was very improbable that any stranger could have managed to get the papers from the Countess de Raymond, or, indeed, could have any object in obtaining them. Still he wished to have certain information on the point. He had searched the Count's apartments at the Cabaret St. Antoine, and had found nothing; if, therefore, any papers were in his possession, the Abbé judged they would most likely be still on his person. He accordingly commissioned his faithful servant, Jean St. Remy, to set various spies about the city, to see and find him. In one direction, Jean undertook the search himself, accompanied by a subordinate; and it was not long before they came upon the object of their search, hurrying on right in front of them. They followed him at a little distance, till suddenly he seemed to disappear behind one of the pillars of St. Magdalene's Church. They waited sometime; but, he not reappearing, Jean left his assistant to watch, with instructions if the Count was discovered, to bring him, if possible, to the Cabaret by a certain specified route. St. Remy himself returned to the Abbé, and related what had occurred.

Shortly after, two figures emerged from the Cabaret, both of a military bearing. The landlord had not noticed any such persons enter; but the Priest had often very private visitors, who evidently did not wish to be seen; so the landlord never appeared as if he saw any one who came out of the Abbé's apartment: therefore they passed without question. Now, these-military-looking persons were no other than the Abbé himself, and Jean St. Remy. As they went along, they conversed in low tones.

"We must search him completely, but with as little resistance as possible," said the Priest.

"But if he resist?"

"Then you must use your pistols; but, even if driven to that

extremity, do not wound him more than is necessary to disable him. No one would recognise me?"

"None but I, your reverence; your disguise is complete."

They walked on; and when they came to the church of St. Magdalene they found the spy, who had been placed there, true to his post, still watching, but he had never seen the Count. The three drew together, and conversed in whispers.

The night was very dark, and among those gloomy columns they wot not of one who was watching them. Earlier in the evening he had seen some persons dogging the Count's footsteps, and he wondered what they meant, so he dogged theirs. What could he have to care for in a nobleman, that squalid wretch; a very picture of misery! Nevertheless he seemed to have some interest, for he followed them as cunningly and quietly as they followed the Count; and when one was left to watch at St. Magdalene's, he took up a position, and in turn watched *him*. And there, in the darkness, they could not see him, though he saw them. He was behind a pillar; and ever and anon a face looked anxiously around to see if any Count had appeared, or if his enemies (so he deemed these men) had gone away; and the face was pale and old. But they saw him not; they felt quite sure they were alone there. And those wits, that thought they could outwit a world, were deceived by that squalid, degraded-looking specimen of humanity.

The Abbé and his assistants talked for a few moments in a low tone, as we have said. At length they came to some arrangement, and were about to separate, when they were startled by a sound proceeding from the front of the church, which was enveloped in darkness. It was like the noisemade by two stones rubbing together. Presently a footstep was also heard, and the Count appeared. He looked carelessly at them, and was about to pass on.

"Halt!" cried the Abbé, in a military tone.

"Wherefore?" replied the Count, endeavouring to pass; whereupon the three stopped his way.

"Your money or your life," said the Abbé, assuming the character of a robber, that he might search the Count's person without that nobleman suspecting who he was.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" replied M. de Raymond. "Well, I say you shall have neither if I can help it. Let me pass, I advise you."

The Abbé and St. Remy immediately seized him by the arms and endeavoured to pinion him, while the third proceeded to search his person. The Count struggled furiously, and would soon have freed himself from their hands.

"The steel," muttered the Abbé, "it is quieter." And presently steel glittered before their eyes; but it was not the steel of the Abbé or his companions; for the moon shone from under a cloud that had long veiled her, and showed him to whom it belonged. The figure was clothed in rags, the face was pale and old, but noble—it was the Beggar!

"Abbé! Count!" said he, quietly looking first at one, then the other, as he addressed each; then, pausing and looking at the other two who stood near, "Are these friends in this matter?"

"They are," said the Abbé, somewhat sullenly.

"You have misunderstood each other, gentlemen," continued the Beggar—(no matter how I became acquainted with the cause of the misunderstanding; that is my affair)—but you, Count, are in the wrong. Among friends, and in such a matter as we are engaged, there should be no secrets, for they destroy confidence. You have not delivered up all the documents you got for the Abbé. He has a right to them all, and so have I. I quite approve of his views in this case, though not of his violence. Do you promise, Count, that you will deliver up all the plans you have not yet given, by to-morrow evening, at the usual place of meeting?"

"I do," said the Count.

"Adieu!" said the Beggar, and each went his separate way.

The following evening the remaining plans were given up to the Abbé; howbeit, the margin, which contained a note, that spoke of a certain secret passage, was neatly cut away, so as not to be observed, and was kept by Mons. de Raymond for his own use.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SORCERER.

"LET M. de Rouleaux be ordered to attend me at an early hour to-morrow," said the King to the gentleman-in-waiting, who was receiving his Majesty's concluding orders for that night.

"Your Majesty's private secretary shall be informed of your Royal pleasure," replied the attendant.

"Let the Ambassadors be informed that we will hold an early court to-morrow, to receive them and discuss their grievances."

"Their Excellencies shall receive your Majesty's gracious message," again answered the precise and formal gentleman-in-waiting.

"Let the Usher be informed that we will *not* receive the company of merchants, with which we are threatened to-morrow, until they learn to come in a more humble and submissive attitude."

Again the attendant gave an assent; and having waited in silence for some seconds, to see if there were any further orders, he retired, leaving his Sovereign with writing materials before him, about to indulge in the innocent pastime of making verses. This was an amusement in which Louis XIV. frequently indulged.

He had not written long, when he heard a slight rustling in the tapestry of the opposite wall; and looking up, his eyes encountered a bold stalwart figure—a man dressed in very glaring colours. The King recognised the garments; the owner he presumed to be one called in Paris, the Sorcerer. He was not a coward, was the King;

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but he started to his feet, and seemed about to call for assistance, when the mysterious visitor, laying his fingers on his lips, added a commanding gesture enjoining silence, and proceeded to speak, in a low and impressive tone, as follows:—

"Louis, King of France, and my Sovereign, I salute you. Be not alarmed; fear no harm from me. I seek heavenly aid for myself and you. But I am of those who study not earthly things; so I know not flattery, and shall speak plainly. A cloud hangs over you, and I would dispel it; the realm of France is in danger, and I would warn you. And God permits the catastrophe to be hid from you, because of a sin long ago committed and yet incompletely repented of. Show your complete repentance by an act that I shall dictate, and you shall be enabled to crush the coming rebellion, and to punish the rebels who lie in wait. Listen to my only conditions:—If you desire to have France a peaceful realm, unharassed by fearful convulsions, which I tremble to think of, but which are preparing for her; if you desire to possess your kingdom in peace, to sit firmly on your throne, yea, to preserve your life, I conjure you, set at liberty a prisoner who has long pined in undeserved captivity, for virtue and not for crime—release the Count de Raymond."

The above address was delivered in a hollow voice, accompanied by wild and mysterious gestures which fixed the King's attention, who remained standing and silent, until the name of the prisoner was mentioned, when he started, looked wildly toward the door as if about to attempt an escape; but apparently taking another determination, he fixed his eyes on the intruder, and said:

"You have harangued your King—as you acknowledged me to be—rather unceremoniously, have endeavoured to raise fears in me, which should induce me to grant the liberty of your friend, as I presume this Raymond is. In requital of the benefit you are

thus to receive, you promise to reveal the details of a conspiracy which you hint is going on against my Government, nay, even against my life. That a loyal subject should come to know of conspiracies, and then withhold information regarding them from his sovereign, unless on certain conditions, seems to me a rather strange sort of fealty. My duty as your sovereign is plain—to have you arrested. But as, if your information be correct, I shall owe you some thanks, I am inclined to overlook the irregular manner of your unannounced and somewhat stealthy entrance here, as also to pardon your unceremonious and discourteous way of addressing me. Answer me, therefore, a few questions plainly. Are you one of the conspirators?"

"No, your Majesty."

"What reasons have you for specially requiring Raymond's liberty?"

"Because he is my relation."

"What is your name?"

"Does your Majesty's eye, then, not recognise the garb of the Sorcerer? As for a name, it has so long been unnecessary to me that I have ceased to use one."

"Sorcerer, indeed!" sneered the King (for his Majesty *was* superstitious, though he endeavoured to conceal that fact); "that name, and the pretensions it implies, may do well for the vulgar mob—the unlearned; but I presume you do not mean to palm off such an absurdity upon me?"

"I make no pretensions, your Majesty, but such as I shall be able to corroborate by deed," replied the midnight visitant, with dignity.

"Then, Master Sorcerer, how came you to me at all? It was not the good of the State that brought you here: it was liberty to your relative only that you sought; and, no doubt, among your magical accomplishments, you could free the prisoner yourself!" And his Majesty, who was fast gaining confidence, as he convicted the sorcerer of imposture

(so he conceived), gave a most triumphant sneer.

The Sorcerer heeded not, but replied, "And so I can; yea, I brought him out of his prison; but he would not have liberty by stealth: he would prefer it at least, from his King: so here I came to beg it."

"You saw the prisoner, then! though I commanded that no one should see him—not even a confessor, if he was dying?" cried the King, in a terrified voice.

"And were you not afraid, sire, to give such barbarous commands?"

"Barbarous! Sir Sorcerer! A man who has been convicted of his crimes deserves no mercy."

"His crimes, sire! You surely forget who I am, or you would not sport with me. On earth there are two who know his crimes, or what you call such: ah! sire, it is my turn to sneer now. These two are you and I."

The King sank into his seat, and gazed earnestly at the speaker, if perhaps he might gather from his face whether or not he was boasting. But there was nothing in the visitor's bearing to indicate anything save calm triumph. Without waiting for the King to question him, he proceeded.

"I shall not detail the particulars; but, I presume, if I allude to a certain plan which was agreed on between my sovereign and a certain priest,—a plot against Cardinal Mazarin—he was not a good man, I will admit; that this plot was discovered and prevented by the Count de Raymond, when I state these things, I say it should be sufficient to prove that I pretend to no knowledge that I possess not. Repent, oh, my sovereign! I kneel to beg it; repent of the foul wrong thou hast so long done him, thy most faithful servant and friend; cause him again freely to breathe the air of a free-born subject; and then mayst thou hope for forgiveness as of a sin repented of, and in some measure atoned for! Thou wouldst then have—what thou hast wanted

these many years—a clear and a quite conscience. For how often in the silence of the night, when only the sounds of the wings of God's angels is heard, hast thou recalled that one foul act, and thy inner judge hard pressing, hast felt accused! And was the secret safe though but thyself had known it? May not He, who formed thy tongue to praise him, and to declare righteous judgment, smite thee with sickness?—may not wild disease approach?—and all thy nerves unstrung, may not thy lips speak, though unwittingly, what has been long concealed, to abate the anguish that may seize even a Royal mind?"

While the midnight one spoke, the King's features were subject to strange contortions—his mind was troubled, his passions worked, and he tried to conceal their workings; but when the speaker referred to the possibility of his divulging the dreadful secret in the ravings of delirium, he cast a glance of mingled hate and fear at his tormenter, who stood calmly regarding him, till he thought him sufficiently recovered to listen, when he thus resumed his address:—

"I have showed you, sire, what I know. How I was helped to know the same must at present be unknown to mortal. Why then, you may ask, do I not publish it? Because it would not advantage me any to do so. Some would disbelieve it as a foul scandal, though it would still affect their confidence in you. Some, perhaps the greater part, though not the most powerful, would believe it; but I have no desire to make my sovereign what he then would be—hated of his people now, and of posterity hereafter. Oh, sire, I wish you to repent in action, as I hope you now do in heart; and then, I am confident that, as once a vile malefactor who added to his other sins that of railing at the Saviour of mankind, was mercifully pardoned, even so, a long-suffering Creator, who knows our frailties and temptations, can, and will forgive you,

too. But though I would encourage the loyalty of your people to a penitent and pious sovereign, yet could I not consent to their esteeming a hypocrite, though he sit on France, my country's throne. Nay, notwithstanding what I formerly said regarding the manner in which my story of your royal crimes might probably be received by your subjects, I might still feel inclined to try its effect by way of experiment. I give you three days to consider." As he ceased speaking, the Count waved his hand majestically.

"Madman!" yelled the King, in a rage, "I have you; "I have you; I shall get you arrested this moment, and so secure you both, and then who shall tell it? Ho! help!"

As he called, his companion produced a box containing some peculiar compound, which, when rubbed hard, exploded with a slight noise, and filled the apartment with smoke. There were voices from the ante-chamber; the door opened; and when the cloud cleared away, the visitor was gone. His Majesty had a very bewildered look. He spoke.

"Did no one pass you through the ante-chamber?"

"No, your Majesty."

The King mused a few moments, then said, "Call the Captain of the Guards,—no, the Lieutenant." He appeared within a quarter-of-an-hour.

"You know the Sorcerer?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"His name?"

"None in Paris knows that, sire, so far as I am aware."

"Never mind. Arrest him immediately."

"Yes, your Majesty."

Scarcely an hour elapsed when the Lieutenant reappeared.

"Well?" said the King, interrogatively.

"He is safe, sire, in the Bastile. He shall be well looked to."

CHAPTER XIV.

PARIS ASLEEP.—THE OLD MONK OF ST. JOHN.—THE BASTILE.—THE COUNT ON HIS WAY HOME RECEIVES INSTRUCTION.

PHILOSOPHER, if thou wouldst have a subject for calm and instructive meditation, let the moon and the stars shine forth clearly, take thy place upon some eminence after midnight, and behold a sleeping city.

Such was Paris. It was past midnight. Even the riotous and the drunken were gone home. The city was dark and still. How many, who, when morning broke had life, now lay a-dying, or had gone? How many, who awoke happy, now lie awake, or take uneasy slumber in their misery? Many; very many!

Though the city seems dark, it is not all so. There might be a lamp or two seen, if the casements were not darkened; and we would find men still waking and working to various ends. There is one in the Convent of St. John the Evangelist. An old man sits there, as he has sat for many a night,—a good man, who would leave the world better than he found it, but is ever lamenting his own feebleness and inability to grapple with its prevailing wickedness. He sits alone there, at that silent hour, still toiling at that which is good. Some of his brother monks secretly (and some even openly) mock at him, and say that he works to no purpose. Still he goes on, labouring in humble faith. He is writing a commentary on the New Testament; and he hopes that, after he is carried to his long home, perhaps some brother may, carelessly or curiously, take up his work to look it over, and be edified by it; and so he writes on. And he may write on in hope; he works for God, who will accept the offering, and, perchance, may use it for glory to himself when least expected. Write on, old priest, and reverend; no hypocrite is beneath thy cowl; and when thy shaven

head bows humbly before God's altar, at least it bows sincerely. Write on in haste; the world much needs thy truth. Write on! write on!

The moon shines brightly over the whole scene; but it seems to shine more brightly than anywhere else on the frowning prison—the grim Bastile. Why so? Perhaps to show that God's love comes most freely to those whom man loves not at all. How much woe lodges there thou canst not tell; nor how much innocence. Crime, too, is represented there; she has her servants bound there. A new one has entered to-night—the Sorcerer. Nay, start not, reader; not the Count, who in that disguise tried to teach the King his duty; he, you know, is a prisoner there already; no new mischief has befallen him; but we now speak of him whom Paris knew and called by that name. For the boldness of him who assumed his character and visited the King, he has been incarcerated. But weep not for him. Though accused by mistake at present, still, for his own crimes of blackest dye, and for his foul impostures, practised through a lifetime, and which make him quite a villain, he merits death, and so receives too mild a sentence in imprisonment.

Meanwhile the Count de Raymond, having divested himself of the gaudy robes in which he had visited the King, was passing, by quiet and unfrequented streets, to his home and prison. He took a somewhat winding road, and as he went he walked faster and faster, seeming to stamp on the ground in anger at every step. And he was angry; as he thought on his recent interview his wrath waxed fearfully vehement; in his thoughts he was trampling on thrones and scattering kingdoms—yea he cursed the head that governed France. Moreover, the road that he took was a curious one—he never had taken that way before—and the way that he went passed by the Convent of St. John the Evangelist. As he drew near that building one of the windows

was opened to let in the cool evening air, for there was no wind. But presently a momentary breeze sprang up—just as if an angel had flapped his wing in passing by—and it carried a piece of paper out of the open window. The Count caught hold of it as it fell, not knowing what he did, and put it into his bosom; and, before he entered the prison, he pulled it out, and the moon was still shining, so he read it.

“Let every soul be in subjection to those that are set over him; for hath not God ordained princes?” and again, “Curse not the king; no, not in thy most secret imaginings, for a bird flying by shall carry thy words, and a thing that hath wings shall reveal it.”

And so that old man had not written in vain. He who looked forward to being read and appreciated only by posterity, even in his own lifetime had, although he knew it not, received his reward; for the words of Sacred Writ, transcribed by his pen, had calmed the Count's blinding passions, and recalled his wayward heart to the path of duty and rectitude.

CHAPTER XV.

MISCHIEF: HOW HIS MAJESTY'S ARMS WERE LANDED WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE OR CONSENT.

ON the same evening on which the Count paid the King a visit, as before recorded, there were strange doings going on elsewhere: while His Majesty was being warned of the existence of the conspiracy, even then were the conspirators working.

We must transport the reader, for a little, to a very small seaport on the west coast of France. Within a very small inn there, an unusually large company was assembled—a gay and promiscuous company, such as had not been seen for many a day, if ever, at that small, and generally unfrequented, tavern. The causes of this large meeting were various: the chief one was, that an armed vessel had that afternoon arrived

from England, laden with Government stores, and was anchored not far from the shore, till instructions should be received as to where the cargo was to be delivered. The crew of this vessel formed a very large part of the company. The captain was there: an Englishman, chiefly remarkable for a very loud voice, a very small nose, and an immense capacity for drinking. We must not omit to mention a rather rare peculiarity for a sailor, particularly of that day—he did not swear; but, instead of the profane and often obscene expressions in common use with his profession, he indulged in a set of expletives which were frequently more ridiculous than either elegant or forcible. The second officer, or lieutenant, was there: a thorough Frenchman, who had a very large nose (of which he made more use in speaking than of his mouth), who likewise talked loudly and opinionatively, and contradicted his captain with very little ceremony. A great many of the sailors were there. And besides these were a few others unconnected with that vessel, or with a seafaring life. The Beggar was there, looking as miserable and idiotic as was his wont. A very fat priest was also there, very much inclined to sleep,—indeed, he seldom seemed rightly awake. We have now mentioned the principal persons present. If they were not a merry company, at least they were a very noisy one. The Beggar and the fat priest, indeed, talked but little, rather listening attentively; and as all cannot very conveniently talk together, it was just as wise, perhaps, in these two to choose the other department—that of audience.

After about an hour's revel, the captain seemed inclined to interrupt the festivities by calling out to the hands, “Now, my men, I cannot give you much longer time to carouse at present: only another evening, when our cargo is safely delivered, I shall be happy again to join you in a health to King Louis. The bounty of the

ship's owners to us is not yet exhausted ; for they have given me a sum of money with which to treat you, part of which you have enjoyed this evening ; and seeing they behave so handsomely, it were a shame in us to abuse their kindness by leaving their ship and its valuable cargo in the charge of only two men, and these the most worthless of the ship's company."

At this moment the fat priest, who sat near the Beggar, rose and went out.

"Now, Captain," said the lieutenant, "you are so very cautious, one would know you were an Englishman."

The Beggar here spoke :—"If I admire the English for anything, it is for their remarkable prudence."

"Say, cowardice !" cried the Lieutenant, getting somewhat excited.

"Cowardice !" repeated the Captain ; "I'll show you a little about that shortly, if you don't keep more civil."

The Beggar again put in his word :—"Both nations, gentlemen, are brave enough, though the French must be allowed to excel in giving effect to their courage in trained exercise : they certainly can use arms better than the English."

"But the English can make the arms better, you rascally vagrant, or why does your king send to England for them ?"

"True," said the Beggar, "division of labour : you make the arms, and we use them. All nations have their distinctive features and peculiarities."

"For instance," said the Captain, winking wickedly at the Lieutenant, "the French have far longer noses than the English."

"Hence they can smell better," said the Beggar, sententiously.

"The English," said the Lieutenant, "ought to be very thankful for their deficiency in nose,"—here he looked pityingly at the Captain's insignificant feature—"and likewise in smell, for their country is in such a filthy condition that acute smell would be a curse to them. This national difference in the size

of the nose may be shown to typify the great characteristic differences between the two peoples. The Englishman has a small organ of smell, and is of a confiding and trustful disposition—though cowardly," added he, somewhat hastily, perceiving that he was contradicting his former assertions regarding English caution. "The Frenchman has a fully developed nose, and he is ever suspicious—takes nothing on trust, but must examine for himself. Trustfulness has very nearly been the ruin of England. Look how they allowed the rebellion to go on under M. Cromwell. The King had no suspicion of disaffection existing until it broke out in civil war ; the people had no idea what was the aim of the rebel Cromwell until it appeared. He was the son of a butcher or a brewer, I forget which, and thought he would like to be a king. He made a bold stroke for it ; and they let him go so far—just for want of smelling—that they were obliged to let him sit down upon their throne. Now, do you think King Louis would have had a rebel like that living, and talking, and working in his kingdom, and not have soon found him out ? Ah, the French nose would have discovered it, and crushed it in the very bud ; indeed, it could not have existed in France at present ; for the loyal people would have been proud to give up such a person to the tender mercies of the law, whenever he hinted at his schemes. King Louis is a great King, and the French are a loyal people !"

Here the fat priest re-entered, looking very much intoxicated ; indeed, one would think he must have been so, for he actually turned toward the Beggar, and addressed him in the Latin tongue, saying, "*Omne rectum este*," ("All is right,") and immediately afterwards seemed to fall into a very sound sleep.

"Hobgoblin !" cried the Captain, "I shall chastise you out of your own mouth ; if the French are not a cowardly nation, and you identify caution with cowardice, then their

King must be taking lessons from somebody, or why should he, surrounded as he is by loyal and dutiful subjects, send for so many stand of arms to England."

"Perhaps the royal nose smells sedition," suggested the Beggar.

The Captain started to his feet, though scarcely capable of standing—"That never struck me! 'Tis time, my men, that we were looking to it."

At this juncture the fat priest unaccountably awoke. He rose to his feet, stretched himself, and went out at the door as before.

"Captain," said the Lieutenant, "I am always ready to bow to your superior judgment—at all events, I must bow to your superior authority; but before you move, just permit me to tell you a story which comes into my mind at present, and which I think bears on the point. In the laboratory of a certain alchemist, among other curious things, there was a cunningly contrived glass, through which, if you looked, all things appeared a great many times larger than they were in reality. This glass was one day left standing on the floor—behind it was a mouse's hole, before it was a cat and her kitten. Howbeit, the cat only sat in front of the glass, the kitten at the side of it; so the cat saw the mouse's hole, and it seemed a very cave for bigness, whereas the kitten saw only the ordinary dwelling-place of an ordinary mouse. Now, in a little while, the mouse came out at the entrance to take the air, and the cat saw it to be a huge and formidable animal, whereas the kitten saw only a mouse; and the cat fled, but the kitten fled not; whereat the cat marvelled."

"Well?" said the Captain, interrogatively; "I don't see how your fable applies."

"Have patience," replied the Lieutenant, "and I shall explain it to you." He spoke slowly and hesitatingly; he was evidently not very sure about the explanation making it any plainer. "You see

that old bundle of rags," pointing to the Beggar, "has been making an uncomfortable remark or two, and your national suspicion—"

"It is the French that are suspicious," said the Beggar.

"Hold your tongue, you tattered idiot!" cried the Lieutenant; "let your betters speak without interruption. I was saying—I am—that is, you are the cat, and I am the kitten."

The fat priest here entered hurriedly:—"A ship on fire," shrieked he, and sat down panting.

"Dogs and monkeys," cried the Captain, starting up, "I hope it is not ours!"

"Yours was the only one in the bay this evening," said the Beggar, in a tone of most provoking and abominable unconcern.

The Captain ran frantically toward the shore.

Let us explain, as shortly as possible, what was now, or rather what had been, going on outside during the revel.

When the fat priest first went out, he gave information to one who waited at the door; and he, in turn, conveyed the message to the shore. The information was, that there were only two men on board the ship, and these two the most worthless of the ship's company. Shortly after, two barges went out toward the ship. There were several men in each. They called to the men on board, and asked why they were not enjoying themselves with their companions on shore. This at once raised a spirit of discontent in the two men left in charge. The bargemen then told them that they had friends on shore who were kinder than they supposed, and had actually sent out wines to them, that they might be merry as well as their neighbours. The dupes swallowed the bait, and admitted some of those who brought the liquor to share it with them. They then retired to a small chamber in the poop, scarcely worth calling a cabin, for the purpose of regaling themselves with the presents, thus leav-

ing the coast clear for unloading. The remaining bargemen then divided their number equally between the two boats, and plied backwards and forwards betwixt the ship and a cave not far off. In this cave the arms were stowed away. A great many persons were waiting to carry the cargo from the barges into the cave; and all these people were clad in very ragged garments—they were beggars from Paris. While their chief was engaged in the tavern, adroitly guiding the conversation into such channels as seemed best fitted to spend time by causing discussion, they had also their quiet sphere of usefulness assigned them.

On board the vessel, the wine had soon the effect for which it was sent; the two men were in a state of helpless drunkenness. The unloading of the ship was therefore easily accomplished. Then came the signal, to look for which the fat priest went out the second time. A fire was to be lighted whenever the last of the arms was safely landed. The bargemen thought, no doubt, that economy was no disgrace; and as the ship wasn't theirs, its loss would not much signify; so, to save looking for fuel, they set fire to the ship, and certainly it was a most brilliant signal.

The Captain rushed back to the tavern wringing his hands. "St. George's mother!" cried he, "who could have thought it would be our ship?"

"I could," said the Beggar, calmly; "I thought something was likely to go wrong."

"Are you at it again, old rotten timbers; how could you suspect anything?"

"French nose, I presume," responded the Beggar, touching that feature emphatically; "superior sense of smell."

CHAPTER XVI.

CONFESSION — THE OLD COUNT DE RAYMOND TURNS UP AGAIN.

LET us withdraw from the busy

world for a little space; let us leave its plots and treasons, and strive to forget its vanities, for we are to look upon a scene from which we may learn the unsatisfying nature of all earthly things: how easily unsettled are the plans of a life in which we are not sure of to-morrow. We are to behold a lady of rank stretched on her death-bed, taking her last look at the world and its affairs; and it seems to her to contain nothing that concerns her save the few kinsfolk that she loves. We are to behold the last hours of Madame la Comtesse de Raymond.

For many years her health had been feeble; for her afflictions had been many—so many, as it is to be hoped, seldom falls to the lot of any one person to bear. The hopes, which had lately been laid out, of again embracing a son whom she had long mourned as lost to her, had been somewhat reviving; but strange rumours began to reach her, that it would only be by the death of the King that her son could gain his liberty. How she obtained any information about the conspiracy will be gathered from her confession farther on in the chapter. It was but little she knew; and the very ignorance in which she was kept made her suspicious of evil; and ever as they delayed, more horrible ideas would haunt her, of the probable projects in which her son was to take part. Thus was her weak frame worn down. And now she lay a-dying; and none but menial hands were there to smoothe her pillow. Her attendants had not thought her so ill as she was. They knew her to be very weak, but the consciousness that her time had come to take leave of the world came first to herself; and she told her favourite servant to summon a priest. Great was the maid's grief when she discovered that her mistress thought herself dying. She had been in Madame's service almost since she could remember anything; they had grown old together. The Countess had ever

been an indulgent mistress; and she now read the tribute to her virtues in her faithful servant's tears.

The maid hastened to do her mistress's bidding, purposing to go for a distant relative of the family—a dignitary of the church who lived not far off. Scarcely, however, had she left the door of the Hotel de Raymond, when she observed an ecclesiastic coming along the street in that direction. As he passed by he looked at her; and her tears were not yet dry, so he saw that she was in grief, and, stopping, inquired the cause of her sorrow. So mild and benevolent was his countenance, that she at once told him all; and he willingly turned in to visit her mistress.

It was a gray and dusky twilight—for the evening was just setting in—when the priest was admitted to Madame's chamber. She was fast sinking, but she opened her eyes when he entered, and seemed to rouse herself for conversation. She saw at the first glance that he was a stranger, though his mild and pitying look at once prepared her to treat him as a confidential friend. He approached the bed.

"Daughter, I hear that thy time is short, and that thou wouldst have the Church's comfort in thy last hours. The wish is pious. I trust thou knowest it is with the Church's head thy peace must be made; to direct in so doing shall be my humble office."*

"Reverend father, I have been well instructed by men, and have

* It is not here intended to convey the idea that such evangelical doctrine was, at this or any other time, countenanced or tolerated by the Romish Church. This priest is meant to represent a very small class of earnest thinkers, who had continued to disentangle the Gospel from the superstitions of their age, and to receive and teach it in tolerable purity. They were still only partially enlightened, and did not usually separate themselves from the communion in which they had been reared. Besides, it will be remembered, Protestant doctrine was largely, though quietly, disseminating throughout France, and even the priests were occasionally benefitted by its light.

been admonished by God in much affliction, sent to me because He loved me. I know I can do nothing to win His favour; and that He knew when He caused the atoning blood to be shed, which alone can take away my sins. I feel, in this dark hour, that I am able to repose my soul upon the merits of that great sacrifice. The reason I desired to have one of the Church's minister's is, that I may confess certain things that weigh upon my mind. But you will perhaps be kind enough, before I proceed farther, to answer me a question—Is it lawful, under any circumstances, to resist the King's authority?"

"My daughter, the doctrine is a dangerous one; and I had rather not touch it: what may be done in cases of great extremity God can himself point out when these great straits do come. But wherefore ask you? The wife of a Raymond—who was ever loyal, though punished for speaking rashly to the King—you can have done nought against your Sovereign's authority?"

"Listen, my father, and then judge me. The Count, my husband, was commanded by the King to quit Paris, and was allowed only a few hours to prepare for his journey. After he had taken leave of me and set out, he was privately arrested and put into the Bastile, and for seven years I knew it not. Then to make room for another prisoner of higher rank than himself, he was removed to a different part of the prison—to a very dungeon of a cell, from which he contrived to escape in a very marvellous manner. Having made his way through the floor into the powder magazine, which was immediately beneath, he found a gate locked, but with the key hanging behind it. The gate could only be opened from the inside; but it was contrived that if drawn too firmly from the outside, a spring again locked it. Out at this door my husband escaped; and as he left no trace behind him of the manner of his exit, the governor

was of opinion that he had made his way out at the chimney. He came to me as soon as he could do so without danger. Father ——," the Countess stopped suddenly—"you will not reveal his existence, will you?"

"Daughter, you are confessing : whatever you say is sacred."

The Countess continued almost in a whisper: "And he has lived in Paris ever since in disguise. I have often seen him and sheltered him. I know that he hates the King, not only on account of his own ill-treatment at his hands, but even more because of his Majesty's malignant ill-usage of our son Pierre, who has been imprisoned now well-nigh twenty years; and they say while the King lives there is no hope of liberty for him. Well, I know my husband hates the King—one must not love the King in preference to a husband or a son."

"Go on, my daughter; God himself planted affections in the heart, and He meant them to be cherished and fostered, not crushed. Go on."

"And I have heard him almost curse the King—don't think very ill of him for that, for his persecutions have been great—and I have lately understood from him that my son shall only obtain his liberty if a plot of some kind against the Government be successful. And of late my husband—he is an old man, reverend father, and sometimes talks in his sleep—and"—(again a whisper) "I am afraid they mean to kill the King. I could not rest at peace knowing this, and not try to prevent it. I would most anxiously desire my son's liberty, but not, I think, on such base conditions. Don't speak of it, father; and yet, perhaps, without betraying anything or anybody, you might find an opportunity of warning his Majesty that he is in danger, and so save him. Will you, father?"

"It shall be done, by God's grace," said the monk.

"You will spare my husband: no one must know that he is living?"

"I shall be faithful, with God's good help."

"There was but one wish I had: but now it cannot be: I had desired to see Pierre once more before I die. But since that may not be, could you visit him? They will surely let a priest see him?"

"I am not very certain; but, in the presence of the governor, I think they will scarcely object. I shall endeavour to see him."

"You must see him. Tell him that his mother's last thoughts were about him. In our last moments I know that we ought to think of the Saviour; but I think it is scarcely a sin to think of those we love too; at least I cannot help it."

"It is no sin if we think of them aright. Commend them to God."

"Oh, father, how often have I besought God and the Holy Virgin * to pity and bless him; ay, even though the King has punished him for treason."

"It was your duty, my daughter, to commend him to our Heavenly Father, who is always ready to listen to the prayer of His creatures. I shall pray for him when you are gone."

"Thanks, good father; you will watch over him."

Her voice sank to a whisper: she was exhausted with so much speaking. After a short pause she resumed:—

"Put your hand under my pillow and you will find a key."

The priest did as he was directed.

"In that writing-table you will find a small drawer: it contains a valuable casket: bring it to me."

The priest went to the table indicated, opened the drawer, and

* It will be observed that, although the Priest does not in so many words reprove the Countess for praying to the Virgin, yet his answer implied a rebuke, as he made no mention of her when commending and encouraging the duty of prayer to God. Nor did he, in the whole of his conversation, allude to that saint or to any other.

took out the casket, which he brought to the side of the Countess's bed. She spoke:—

"Take it, reverend father, and let its contents be applied by you for the good of the church, or for such charitable purposes as you may think fit, and pray for me."

"Daughter," said the priest, in a tone of grave disappointment, "I trust you are not so far ignorant as to suppose that you shall thereby benefit your soul. You can do nought of merit that shall find favour with God, or win pardon from Him. Put your whole trust in His blessed Son's atonement to obtain that. He will save all that trust in Him."

"Reverend sir, I meant not that. I have no hope to purchase God's best gift of salvation for so small a price; and, I bless his holy name, I have no need." The Priest's face brightened on hearing these words. "But it is fit—deem you not?—when about to quit this transitory scene, that we should make some provision for the poor ones whom we leave to struggle here—as well for their bodily as for their spiritual wants. You may take that without scruple. It is but a small gift." She paused a moment, then continued. "I feel" (her voice was very feeble) "that I have a very short time to live; and though I have no doubt of entering upon ultimate happiness, darkness seems at times to flit before my mental eyes—I feel afraid of the state between. You will pray for my soul, good priest."

"My daughter, concerning the intermediate state, which is commonly called purgatory, the church herself teaches but darkly. Our business, therefore, is with the great realities that are revealed—the worlds beyond this, one of happiness and one of misery, to one of which all mankind are hastening. But I conceive, and I humbly trust I err not, that when God sent His Son to suffer for all believers, and to save them from punishment, He left not His work half-done, but finished it. There can be no use for torment, therefore,

in a future state to those who accept of God's salvation; and, as their state is finally fixed before they leave the body, our prayers cannot avail anything to alter their already fixed destiny. Nevertheless, until they resume their bodies they cannot be admitted to heaven, and therefore cannot enjoy complete happiness; it is lawful to pray that they may be rendered quite contented during the period of their imperfect felicity, and that their souls may be filled with cheering subjects of contemplation during this time of suspense. Such prayers, for all God's church not yet triumphant, I humbly offer at morn and eventide, and I shall not forget you."

The Countess listened with wrapt attention. Since the reverend father had talked with her she was much more calm and resigned; nevertheless, as her mind grew weaker, she fretted somewhat, and the old man sat beside her and soothed her, nor could she have desired a better comforter. For a long time she lay quiet, the lamp showing dimly, and the venerable priest sat silently; not a word was spoken.

Instructive sight! to gaze upon one who is passing the last hours on earth, thinking the last thoughts. Feeble as Madame de Raymond was, her mind was actively employed; and her only worldly subject of thought was the darling subject of *mother*. She thought of her son, that son from whom she had so long been separated; and as she thought of him she wept. In a low, despairing tone she murmured—the monk had to bend down his ear to catch the sound—"Oh, God, if there is aught earthly I can now desire, that can be of any value to me, grant me graciously to see my son."

"Amen," said the priest, and he bowed his head reverently.

Suddenly she started half up in the bed, and almost shrieked out—"Where is my husband? Call him. He said he would liberate Pierre. Put your hand upon a knob in the wall—that's it—pull it

out, if he is there he will come." The bell was pulled as directed, but there was no answer; for he who was called had not yet returned from the small seaport of which we spoke a little ago. He was among the conspirators.

The aged monk was touched by the wild grief of the Countess, when she called to mind that he whom she sought was then far

away, and might not be home for some days, perhaps. He could do little to assuage that grief, but he knelt down by the bed, and began to repeat the prayers for the dying. She interrupted him, quietly laying her hand upon his arm.

"Could you not say the prayers in French as well as in Latin? I could the better join in them."

AN AMERICAN HOTEL DINNER.

How startling is the sound of the dinner-gong! The tympanum suddenly recoils beneath the swell of the brazen instrument, and echoes the alarm to its fellow member of the lower house, of which Appetite is the speaker. In a large hotel the effect is magical. What a rush from all quarters of the house to the dining-room! Chambers, offices, and closets, are hastily deserted by their occupants, that the elements of an unspeakable hurly-burly may mingle at the *table-d'hôte*. Loungers in the street catch the sound with wonderful acuteness, and hasten homeward to the hotel. The boarder under the barber's hands frets at the practitioner's slowness, gets cut while uttering a violent oath, starts up, looking daggers, and wiping the soap hastily from his half-shaved chin, seizes his hat, and rushes to the place of feed.

In one dense crowd, they pour in at the door; pushing and squeezing, jostling and swearing, as if life itself depended upon the celerity of their entrance. Dignity is nothing, decency is nothing. A choice seat at the table is everything.

The twenty or thirty individuals who are already seated at the head of the board, and in the immediate vicinity of the choicest eatables, are "old heads;" they have "cut their eye teeth;" they are "up to snuff;" or, to cut the classics, and descend to homely English, they know how to dine in an American hotel; an accomplishment by no means to be lightly regarded. Every day, about half-an-hour before the dinner hour, they station themselves near the door of the dining-room, and, with a patience worthy of Job, await its opening. Barely does John the waiter have time to sound the gong, the notes of which I have said are so magical, before they dart by him, and the last vibration of the brazen monitor finds the men of

brass seated at the table. Some unsophisticated persons may think this a contemptible subserviency to the appetite; if so, they do the worthies much injustice. Their motives are of a high order; an honour to themselves, and a great light to the world. Example is everything. Punctuality is a jewel. Washington said so, and he was a man of veracity. The hour to dine, as specified in the rules and regulations, posted up in the "office," was three. Not one minute before or after three, but three precisely. Some inconsiderate man may think that a minute or two out of the way could make no material difference. Don't trust such a one with the conveyance of your wife and five small children to a steam-boat pier! Ten chances to one he misses the boat. "Time is money," and two minutes lost daily is seven hundred and forty minutes per annum. At this rate, supposing a man to live seventy years, a fair computation when we consider the caoutchouc case of Joyce Heth — thirty-five days eleven hours and four-sixtieths, are wasted in a lifetime, by being two minutes behind-hand at dinner! Shades of Washington, Franklin, and Dr. Alcott!—what a dissipation of money! It was of this that the men at the door ruminated. They wished, like Washington, to set a good example in being punctual. If, in virtuously striving to excel in such a cause, they tread on each other's corns, and tumble over each other's heels, making themselves appear excessively ridiculous, it is our business not to laugh at, but to condole with them, as martyrs who suffer for our sake. Many a gouty toe has been ground into torture, in its owner's generous emulation to be first and most punctual at the dinner-table. What disinterested martyrdom!

The crowd have squeezed themselves into the room. Such a

scrambling and jostling for seats! Spare the crockery! The din—from din comes dinner—redoubles. Such an outcry! Babel is music to it. "Waiter!" "Waiter!" "John!" "Waiter!" "Thomas!" "Thomas!" "Waiter!" "John!" "Thomas!" "Soup!" "Soup!" "Soup!" — were iterated in all octaves, from contralto to soprano. I was a "looker-on in Vienna," when the scenes which follow occurred, and "I speak the things which I do know."

"Give us a stout, hearty plate of soup, William!" said a short, crimson-faced man, with an abdominal periphery like a semi-globe. As he gave this order for a second plate of soup, he shoved into the waiter's hand, open to receive the plate of a gentleman who had as yet secured nothing, his own dish, and bade him make haste. Ignorant of "dinner etiquette," as Fanny Kemble styles it, a dozen of those around us had at once commenced on the solids, which, of course, made the rest work like beavers to finish their soup; and some of those at the end of the table, who, having but just received the initial liquid, were still sipping, after their luckier friends at the favoured end of the table, had concluded, were admonished of the necessity of making haste, by the removal of their plates by the impatient waiters. Waiters are systematic. People should be more simultaneous in eating soup. A polite man swallows his, scalding hot, that he may keep pace with his more fortunate neighbours.

"Here! here! you rascal, bring my soup!" bawled out a man with a thin, vinegar aspect. His plate had suffered abduction. The waiter feigned not to hear. The wrinkles on the pungent face visibly sharpened. That look would have soured an entire dairy. In a voice thin and sharp as his features, he exclaimed, "Here! here! you unmannerly Irish scape-goat! (Ah! you hear at last, do you?) bring back my soup instantly!"

"It's ag'in' the rules, Sir-r! I can't do it, Sir-r. But here's a

beautiful arrangement!" replied the Irishman, passing a bill of fare.

"I want my soup, you Irish blackguard!"

"Can't do it, Sir-r; the rules must be observed. Can't give you any more soup, Sir-r; the *mates* is on, Sir-r; them must be ate nixt; them's the rule, Sir-r;" and the waiter ran to answer a call farther up the table.

The discontented man swore as terribly as if he had formed one of the celebrated army in Flanders. "Pretty hotel, this! Excellent regulations! Polite servants! *Must* eat meat, must I? I'll see 'em hanged first. Here, you Chowder-head, bring back my ——"

"Green peas, gen'lemen—green peas!" squeaked a bean-pole waiter, with a nose like a sausage, and little twinkling eyes. A dozen hands grabbed convulsively at the dish. Green peas were a great rarity; a fact sufficiently evinced by the complacent air of the servant, as he announced them. A dish of gravy and a bottle of catsup were upset in the scuffle, much to the annoyance of the sour man, in whose lap a greater part of the first sought a depôt. "You have got your soup, I find, sir," said a wag opposite, at which everybody laughed; and one individual at an untimely moment, when his mouth was full of Scotch ale, whereby a great gurgling and spluttering ensued, ending by a general spit upon the "fixins" of all who were near him; a most impartial division, for all received a portion. As soon as he could make himself heard above the discord, the person to whom the wag's remark had been addressed answered, with much asperity, "That's *Irish* wit, I s'pose; I hate Irish!"

"Peas, waiter!" "Waiter, peas!" "Peas! peas! peas!" exclaimed a hundred voices in a breath. Reasonable souls! they looked to be all helped at once!

"Pass those peas!" said a score of impatient voices to the gentleman with the crimson face, who in the scuffle had succeeded in securing the dish to himself.

"Ha, ha!" he spluttered, complacently, with his mouth half full of salmon, "I haven't eat any of these 'ere for a long while!"

"They *look* very fine!" said the next but one adjoining, in a manner that implied a strong desire to ascertain whether they did not *taste* respectably.

"Very, *very*" replied the fat man, as he scooped nine-tenths of all there were in the dish on to his own plate. Sundry eyes glanced pitch-forks at him. They were evidently astonished. They should not have been. The gentleman came from a western pork-growing district. He fattened his own swine. "I'm special fond of peas!" said he, half in enthusiasm at his own appetite, and half as a sort of an apology.

"Split me if I didn't think so," exclaimed the wag.

"Well, it's nothing strange!" snapped out Vinegar, taking the part of the obese, and chuckling at the discomfiture of the others.

"*Some people will eat* until, being unable to help themselves, we shall be compelled to lift them out of their seat!" exclaimed one of the disappointed, giving the fat man a look that was not to be misconstrued.

I looked about me for some peas, but saw none. As I was scrutinising, my eyes encountered the rueful and bewildered face of a modest young man, with an empty plate. In all probability he had never dined before in a hotel; at least the diffident manner with which he received the inattention paid to his modest requests, seemed to say as much. A constant fear, too, lest he should not behave quite like the rest,—(!!)—appeared to haunt him; and the longer he was neglected, the more he appeared embarrassed. Poor fellow! he has not yet received a mouthful to eat! Brass is, emphatically, an accomplishment. The young man looked very ridiculous for the lack of it; and I pitied him.

"Waiter!" said I, winking peculiarly to an Adonis with squint

eyes, and a mouth like a cod-fish. He sprang to my side. The wink had touched his feelings. I knew it would. A waiter's heart is open to a wink, when words are useless.

"Get me some peas and fresh salmon, on a clean plate."

The fellow's eyes concentrated into the deepest squint, as he looked inquiringly, first into my face, and then at the space between my thumb and forefinger. Apparently not seeing there what he had expected, his sprightly, helpful manner died away very suddenly, and his answer, as he stared mechanically up the table, was unqualifiedly brief.

"Guess there arn't any here—don't see any."

I pointed to my thumb and forefinger. A quarter-dollar filled the space so lately vacant.

"Do you see any now?"

The mouth opened wide and assumed an agreeable grin, and the eyes an extra squint, and for half a minute glanced scrutinisingly around the table.

"I think I does," said he. His sight was completely restored.

"I thought you would," said I, dropping the coin into his horny palm. What wonders 'the root of all evil' can accomplish! It makes the best vegetable pills in the world, and may be used with equally astonishing success in all climates.

The disinterested servant brought me the peas and salmon with great alacrity, and looked as if he would like to have the silver dose repeated, but I had no further use for him, and stared coldly upon his enthusiasm. He was a philosopher, and a deeply-read student of human nature. He understood that cold look as readily as he had done the wink, and, to adopt a western phrase, quickly "obsquatulated." Helping myself to a portion of the viands which I had been so fortunate as to obtain, I passed the remainder to my modest neighbour. He appeared very grateful, but was too much embarrassed to thank me. Having helped himself to salmon, he was proceeding (leisurely, lest he should seem in-

decorous) to take some peas, when the dish was unceremoniously seized, and carried to the obese, who had bribed the waiter with a shilling to execute the manoeuvre. Whereupon my modest friend looked very blank, and Vinegar took occasion to dilate sarcastically upon the expense of feeding pigs in the west; in which the fat man, unsophisticated, and seeing no allusion, coincided with fervour. He had swine to sell, and crying up the expense of fattening them would tend to increase their value in the market. And here ensued a confab between the wag and the obese, in which the latter was made the unwitting butt of a thousand and one small shafts, touching his professional and personal affinities.

"Clear the tables!" sang out the authoritative voice of one decked in a short white apron, who brandished in a masterly manner a huge carving-knife and fork. This was no less a personage than the head waiter or "butler," as he directed his fellow-servants to call him. He knew the responsibility of his situation, and filled it with great dignity. His own talents had raised him, step by step, from the comparatively low office of a knife scourer and cook's errand boy, to the high stand which, knife in hand, he now occupied. His history is an excellent illustration of the old maxim, that "talent, like water, will find its level." I could dwell upon the hopes and aspirations of the lowly knife-scourer—his surcharged bosom overflowing in the lonely watches of the night, as he plied his rag and "rotten stone;" his longings for the berth of porter; the attainment of his wish; his enthusiasm upon his first *debut* with Day and Martin; his still craving ambition; in short, his

whole rise and progress and final attainment to that pinnacle of usefulness, the situation of head waiter.

My modest neighbour, supposing that the last-named order was intended as an insinuation that the guests had eaten enough, arose and walked off. Upon reaching the door and turning round, he seemed to perceive his mistake, and that the order was but for a clearance of the meats, to make room for the pastry; but, ashamed to expose his ignorance of "etiquette," by returning to the table, he left the room, hoping, I doubt not, from the bottom of his soul, that those he had left behind would ascribe his withdrawal to surfeit rather than ignorance. He probably adjourned to a neighbouring eating-house, to appease his tantalised appetite.

"What pudding is this, waiter?" said a gentleman opposite.

"It's a *pud-ding*, Sir-r," was the satisfactory reply.

"We know it's a pudding, but what *kind* of pudding is it? Find out *what* pudding it is."

"That's aisily done," said he, as with the utmost *sang-froid* he perforated the crust of the doubtful dish with his dirty thumb. "Sure, gentlemen, it's a rice!"

"You ignorant ape! don't you know better than that? You ought to be lynched!"

"He would if he was in our parts," said the fat gentleman, swallowing a glass of Champagne, which he had taken, uninvited, from my bottle.

"Look here, Cabbage-head!" said Vinegar, twiggling the offender's ear; "bring me my soup!"

I left the table. It was my last hotel dinner.

THE MISERY OF SUCCESS.

"HAVE you been to Ricardo del Bene's lecture to-night, Rudolf?"

"Yes; wonderful—is it not? I must own that, with all my previous determination to doubt every word he said, I was startled into something like belief."

The speakers were two young men in the student's dress of H—; they were standing on the steps of the University, in the fast coming darkness of a November evening. "I saw him after the lecture," continued the first speaker, who was tall and dark, and whose eyes dilated with excitement as he spoke. "And seeing I was interested in his theories, he invited me to come to his house to-night at twelve, and he would convince me by proofs. Come with me. Will you? For I am not ashamed to own that I feel a little fearful."

"And, pray, what is it that Felix von Stein is fearful of?" asked a bright-eyed, fair-bearded youth, coming up the steps towards them.

"What Herr Carl Siedle would also fear, if I mistake not," replied Felix.

"I don't know what fear is," said Carl, twirling the end of his long moustache.

"Well, then, will you go with us, Carl?" asked Rudolf Arnold, who, being exceedingly nervous himself, was only too glad to press another into their expedition.

"Yes, my friends; I'll go with you anywhere: to the haunted depths of the Black Forest, or the perilous heights of——"

"Well, we don't doubt your courage," said Rudolf, testily interrupting him; "it's only to Signor Ricardo's, at twelve to-night, to see some proofs of his skill."

"Where have you been all the evening, then," he continued, turning his back on Felix, and speaking low.

"Where? Well, if you must know, I have been at your father's house."

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"With Ellen, I suppose. Ah! Carl, it is little use, my father will not let her marry a poor student."

Carl shrugged his shoulders, and laughed, and then stroked his moustache and sighed.

"Will you go with us, Carl," said Felix, breaking up their conference.

"I'll go," said Carl; "but why at that most ghostly hour of midnight?"

"Because," said Felix, "firstly, there is great fear of the priests. They hold his deeds unholy, and he dare scarcely be seen about in the day-time. Secondly, there is some mystical sympathy between the breaking of the night, and the breaking of the chain of death; at least, so he said to-night," he continued apologetically, as he saw a smile of derision on Carl's face. "He will bring a dead man back to life," continued Felix, dropping his voice into a whisper. "Is it not wonderful?"

"Oh, I know," said Carl, "it is done by galvanism; but it's only momentary they make them move their arms and legs, that's old and stale—no fun at all."

"He keeps them alive!" said Rudolf.

"Nonsense! I don't believe it. It is not possible," said Carl.

"Well, we shall see to-night," said Felix. "In the meantime, we must not retire to our beds, as we may oversleep ourselves. What shall we do?"

"Why, fortify our nerves by some Schnapps," said Carl; and passing an arm through each of his companions, the three took their way to the nearest beer-house.

Some hours afterwards and the three young men were taking their way down some of the narrowest streets in the town. It was a dark gusty night, and the wind blew the oil-lamps that hung in the middle of the street to and fro,

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casting first light and then darkness upon their path.

At that late hour no one was about, and their footfalls seemed to break upon the stillness with a startling loudness. Carl Siedle joked and laughed, and endeavoured to raise the courage of his companions, which was evidently at a very low ebb. Rudolf once or twice suggested that it would be wiser to give up so foolish an expedition, and return to their homes. But Felix had promised the Italian lecturer, and Carl was now determined to go on to the end; so they urged poor Rudolf on between them—one with laughs and jeers, the other with persuasions.

At last they came to a dark turning, where there were no more lamps, and they had to feel their way round in almost total darkness. They trod softly and dropped their voices to a whisper. A few more steps, and Felix whispered, "Here it is," and then stooped and tapped at a low window.

It was gently opened and a voice asked, "Who is there?"

"Von Stein and two friends," was the reply.

"Wait a moment, and I will open the door to you."

The sound of many bolts and bars being unfastened, a key turned in the lock, and then a heavy barred door was opened, and there stood on the threshold, a small, weird-looking man, with a candle in his hand.

"Come in," said this strange being, and they followed him in through the doorway; then he turned, and closed, and barred the door behind them in a way that made Rudolf's heart stand still with terror. It was no magician's cave which they now entered, but a warm and lighted sitting-room; a bright fire on the hearth, a couch drawn up beside it, and a cat curled up on the rug.

There was nothing conspicuous in the room but a book-case filled with ponderous-looking volumes.

The chill and terror that had for a moment crept over the heart of

the bravest of the three students as they stood outside in the cold dark night, melted at the sight of the warmth and pleasantness of the room. Rudolf drew a deep sigh of relief.

"What are the names of your friends?" asked Signor Ricardo. While Felix replied, Carlo turned to examine the Italian. He had never been to his lectures, and fancied him to be an old man; now as he gazed curiously at him he could not tell if he were old or young; the long black hair which hung on his shoulders was untouched by grey, the black deep-set eyes were undimmed in lustre, but the sallowed and lined face was marked by the traces of care and thought; if the man before him were not passed middle age, his face was preternaturally aged by some excessive feeling. The whole face and figure impressed Carl with its cunning and power.

"You do not believe in me, or my power," said Del Bène, bending on him the full brightness of his eyes, and smiling with such a sinister twitching of his thin lips that it could scarce be called a smile, and partook more of a grin.

And as Carlo murmured something like a denial, the Italian continued.

"Never fear; you will believe in me before you go."

"There has been a vision ever haunting the philosophers of old, that there is somewhere in nature an elixir of life, some combination of chemicals, which has a power of reviving the drooping life and giving it a new impetus. We, in these more enlightened ages have forsaken that dream, but we have discovered another, equally as profound as useful. After years of patient toil and study, benefitting by the discoveries of my predecessors, I have brought to perfection and brought to practice, what they scarcely dared to use. Remember, it is a received axiom that there is nothing in nature to produce death, necessarily—but I weary you—alas! you are as others, and take but little heed of the won-

ders of science and nature. What have I earned for myself by my long labours? the blessings and honours of a grateful people?—Nay, fear, distrust, hatred, perhaps death."

With a flame from his black eyes, and an angry clench of his hand, he checked himself, and touched a bell, which was instantly answered by a black servant.

He spoke a few words to him in an unknown language, and, receiving an answer in what seemed the affirmative, motioned to them to follow him.

Removing a volume in the book-case, he touched a spring, and the shelves slid back, disclosing another room.

"I am obliged to be secret," he said, "because of the bigoted ignorance and fury of the priests." He waited for them to pass in, and then closed the door behind him.

It was a large, low-roofed room, well lighted by several oil lamps, which were suspended from the ceiling.

The walls were lined on one side by a glass case, filled with bones, fossils, herbs, and preserved specimens of animals and parts of the human body. Two or three skeletons adorned the corners of the room and surveyed the new-comers out of the cavernous depths of their empty eye-sockets.

Here stood a galvanic battery, there was an electrifying machine, while bottles of all sorts, shapes and sizes containing most of the essences and mixtures that were ever discovered or made, were ranged on shelves around the walls.

But the students had not time to notice these things, for there was something wrapped in a white sheet, lying on a long table in the centre of the room, that absorbed at once all their fearful interest.

"This body has been twelve hours in the river," said Ricardo, advancing to the table and lifting up one lifeless hand, let it fall again heavily: "we shall see if we cannot make it walk round this table before six hours more are passed."

The morning light was stealing cold and misty over the hills around the town, when the three students, wrapped in their cloaks, stole like grey shadows from the Italian's door.

CHAPTER II.

A YEAR had passed since the three students left Ricardo del Béné's door,—a year full of hope, joy, grief, and suffering, when again, at the same hour of midnight, on such another moonless, dark night, there was a rap at the Italian's low lattice-window. "Who is there?" inquired a voice within.

"Carl Siedle," replied the person who had knocked. "If you remember, I came to you a year ago with Felix Van Stein and Rudolf Arnold. Oh! let me see you, I conjure you by all that is sacred!" and he beat his hand impetuously on the window-sill.

The Italian opened the door and led the way into the room, then turned and looked searchingly at the young man.

Carl's dress was disordered, as though by hasty travelling; he wore spurs, and carried a riding whip in his hand; his face was pale and haggard, his eyes wild.

"I have ridden all night," he cried, sinking in the nearest chair, and wiping his heated brow.

"I have come on an errand, which if you will do for me, I will pay you with bags of gold—the half of my estate—for I have become rich since I saw you last. I have inherited my uncle's estate."

He leant for a moment against the back of the chair, as though wholly exhausted, while Ricardo quietly opened the cupboard and took from it a bottle of wine, and pouring out a liberal glass, he placed it in the young man's hand, saying:—

"Drink before you tell me more."

"Ah!" said Carl, as he finished, "I think I have not eaten since yesterday."

"Now," said the Italian, "if you wish me to do aught for you, you must be calm, and relate to me

all that happened on the day after you left me. Did you believe——”

“Believe!—of course; why should I be here now if I did not believe? Oh! do not ask me of anything else, but come with me at once. My wife is ill—is dead!—you can give her back to me. She is Rudolf’s sister, and we have only been married six months—such happy months! My riches prevailed: they let me have her—we have only been together such a short time, and then to be parted—oh! it is too cruel.”

The Italian smiled sardonically, as the young man poured forth his passionate lamentations.

“Did your companions believe in me when they left here?” he inquired.

Carl put his hand to his brow in a bewildered manner, then said, “Yes, I think so, although they never spoke of you or that evening again—but, oh! I beseech you, do not waste time in talking, when every moment is precious: it was only yesterday Ellen died—save her—save her—she is my joy, my life; I cannot live without her; if you have any human tenderness, any compassion——”

“Stay,” said the Italian, “be calm. I am willing to try all I can do, on two conditions: that you will pay me, first, and that you will keep it a secret. Are you willing?”

Carl would have promised anything.

“I can only reanimate her for a year, at the end of which time the operation must be repeated: each time I shall demand ten thousand thalers.”

Carl bowed his head.

“Then we will start as soon as I have collected a few things that are necessary.”

It was evening before Count Siedle and Ricardo del Béne reached the Castle of Einbron.

It was high up among the mountains, a steep winding road leading up to it, and the jaded horses, their sides covered with foam, panted slowly along, notwithstanding the urging of whip and spur.

“Did I ask you if any knew of your lady’s death?” asked Ricardo, as they came in sight of the castle-gate.

“Many of the servants had crowded into the room when she died; but after the first madness of my grief, I thought suddenly of you, and I said to them I knew it was only a trance, and I would hasten at once to a physician whom, I knew could restore her. They thought I was beside myself with grief, and were almost afraid to let me go alone: but I would not send another. I could not bear to remain quiet. I left her old nurse to watch beside her, and commanded that no one should enter the room.”

“Do her family know of it?”

“No.”

The castle-gate was opened as they approached, for their ascent up the steep hill had been noticed.

“Ask if there has been any change?” whispered the Italian.

Carl did so, but he scarcely noted the answer, knowing so well what that answer must be; but the supposed physician listened thoughtfully to what the servant said, and then remarked:—

“Yes, I have seen trances as long besore, which appeared just like death.”

The servants and retainers who had gathered at the door to witness their lord’s return, gazed at the Italian curiously and fearfully as he spoke, and eyed with something like terror a large case which he lifted carefully from the horse, and carried himself into the hall.

They proceeded at once to the room where the Countess lay, dismissed the attendant and remained there alone some time.

Nothing could be done until midnight had passed. Ricardo occupied the time by taking a hearty meal, which was prepared for him, with as calm an aspect and good appetite as though no matter of life and death hung on his hands. The only expression which disturbed his tranquil face was a half-scornful, half-pitying smile, with which he watched Carl, who paced restlessly up and down the apart-

ment—longing and yet dreading the hours to pass.

It was some hours past midnight. The Count and Signor Ricardo were standing over the couch whereon lay the lifeless but beautiful form of the Countess Ellen.

The Italian held an instrument to her heart, while now and then a slight shuddering seemed to pass through her frame. How long those midnight hours had been ere any signs of life had appeared, what agonies of doubt and despair Carl had lived through, he alone knew; and now, exhausted by his long journey, absence of food and sleep, he watched with terrible interest every wave of life that seemed circulating in that loved form, and his hope rose and faded as the life rose and fell. Many times during the awful, silent hours of the night, his trust in the Italian's skill had seemed to die within him, and all the horrors of utter despair crept over his soul. But through all the Italian persevered, little heeding his companion, and at last he seemed rewarded; for as the first rosy tint of the sun touched the mountains, making strange unearthly light over the landscape, a like flickering rosy tinge crept over the Countess's white cheek. The Italian's ardour increased, the Count's hope revived—he knelt upon the bed, and called passionately upon her name. Deeper came the rosy tint outside, deeper the colour on her cheek; the sun came slowly up: the light expanded and grew, and the life within that lifeless form stirred more vividly. At last the sun came up beyond the furthest peak of the mountains, and shone out full and glorious, paling the lights in the chamber. Ricardo, who had been watching for it, flung open both the casements and the light and air flooded the room. As he did this, the eyelids of the Countess quivered, she breathed a long-drawn sigh, and half raised herself from the bed.

"Ellen, Ellen!—my love! my love!" cried Carl, in an ecstasy of joy, clasping her to him.

She opened her eyes and gazed wandringly at him, and then round the room.

"Give her some wine," said Ricardo.

Carl, with a trembling hand, held a glass to her lips. She drank, and then uttered a low sound.

"Oh! speak to me," cried the husband, leaning over her; "it is your husband, your own, let me hear your dear voice—only one little word, and my heart will beat again." The living breath came warm up his face, the lips were warm to his touch, but the eyes gazed vacantly at his.

"Ellen, dear, speak to me," but there was no answer.

"Is she not strong enough to speak yet?" he said, turning a wild, appealing glance on Ricardo.

"She can speak now as well as she will ever speak," he replied.

"She is not dumb, then?"

"No," said the Italian, and that hateful grin twitched up his lips.

"Oh! for mercy tell me what it is, then!" cried Carl.

"Young man, I gave you what you asked—the life. I cannot give you back the *soul*."

Carl gazed at him, then at his wife; then, with a frenzied air he raised his arm to strike the Italian, but the strain had been too much, the disappointment too great. He fell to the ground in a long and death-like swoon.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Carl came to himself he found the Italian gone, the money having been previously paid him, owing to his cunning arrangement; and the Countess alive—alive as far as the body went, a soulless human creature. There were the eyes, but no intelligence shone out from them as it once did; the lips, but they never smiled; the power of speech, but it only echoed parrot-like, the words it heard.

The awful blank; the form without the spirit; the hush of the flesh without the soul. The servants and attendants believed that their lady's brain was turned by her illness, and that she was

an imbecile. After a time her own family heard of her strange state, and some came with sorrow and consternation, others with only curiosity, to see her. So the horrible, slowly-dragging days and weeks and months crept on, with this ghastly effigy of his former love beside him. She became restored to full health and strength, and she ate and drank, and walked and slept, with the enjoyment and placidity of an animal. She was merry at times, with a ghastly, unmeaning giggling, as she was sad, with equally unmeaning moans and tears.

Oh, the contrast that daily and hourly forced itself upon his attention, between this automaton and that bright creature, all gaiety, intelligence, and tenderness, whom he had lost! He endeavoured at times to awaken some memory of her past life: he showed her places where she had been before, pictures, books, and flowers, that she used to admire and tend; but she gazed on them all with blankness.

For a time he was her constant companion and attendant, and she followed him about, and showed pleasure at the sight of him, much as his hound did; but this preference only made it more dreadful. There were terrible moments too, when she exhibited a mad fury; and, if anything crossed her inclinations, she would fly at him, and scratch, and bite like an animal. From these sickening scenes, Carl would rush wildly away, mount his horse, and ride furiously for hours; or hide himself in the forest, where he would cast himself on the ground, with groans and tears, lamenting his rash desire for her life. This, then, was the punishment of one who strove against the laws of nature and the decrees of God.

So the weary days, and weeks, and months went by; the Spring ripened into Summer, and the Summer into Autumn, and still the Countess lived and throve, and Carl's heart grew sick and faint, and all the beauty of the year, the long glorious summer days, and the golden glories of Autumn

passed him unheeded; still, a terrible fascination held him by her side, and he was absent from the court, and the council, and the gay days when the courtiers and the king went hunting in the forest.

But when the first cold breath of Winter touched the earth, the Countess began to sicken and pine. She remained indoors; then she became too weak to leave her room, and at last to leave her bed. As Carl sat watching by her bedside, something of the old love and tenderness came back to his heart; and as the life faded day by day, there was a strange struggle within him, between regret to lose even this semblance of his lost love, and relief to think that this burden would so soon fall from him.

At last, as there is an end to all human misery as well as joy, an evening came when Carl stood gazing gloomily out of the window of her chamber in the darkening landscape, a hand was laid on his arm, and turning, he found himself face to face with Signor del Béné.

"How did you come here," he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper.

"What matters it now," replied the Italian, "if I am here; you want me, do you not?"

"No!" cried the Count, fiercely. "I hoped never again to see your face."

"Do you know what day this is," said the Italian, significantly, "it is the day on which I was here last—your wife will die to-day if you do not seek my aid once more. Now, shall I stay or go?"

"Go," cried the Count, before I add to my other madness by a deed of blood, go you away—"you have deceived me once; I erred in trusting to you and your unholy skill. I have repented it bitterly ever since."

With a derisive bow and smile, the Italian left the room, and the Count turned and drew aside the rich silk curtains that shaded the bed.

Faintly the life stirred in that still form, shudderingly the breath came between the rapidly paling lips.

As he gazed on her, lying there, it seemed as though the past year had been only a long, hideous dream, and it was again the time when he had lost the love of his youth.

"She is leaving me now for ever—she is passing tranquilly away; but alas! I have no wish to stay her—I am content that it should be so."

Murmuring these words, he bent over her; there was a long-drawn sigh, and Edith, the Countess von Siedle, passed away. He did not stir from her side for some time; for how long he did not know until afterwards, when he knew it must have been some hours.

Once, some one had come to the door and asked admittance, but this had not roused him from his stupor. It was not until many cries resounded throughout the castle, and there was a rush of many feet along the corridor, and many voices called his name, that he woke as from a deep sleep, and hastening like one half-crazed

from the room, found himself in the midst of his terrified attendants, who told him the castle was on fire. A few steps, and he saw the flames himself, they were now issuing from all parts.

All around him were too much occupied by cares for their own safety to answer his questions as to how the fire broke out, or to obey his commands to return and convey the Countess from her room. No one attended to him, no one seemed to hear; he turned to go himself—the corridor was a mass of flames, he struggled on a few steps, then fell to the ground, suffocated by the smoke, two of the retainers happily found him, and succeeded in carrying him to the open air, but his return to consciousness was only to behold all he had loved and valued a heap of ruins.

* * * * *

A short time afterwards Carl took his way to distant climes to shake off the memory of that dreadful time in fighting bravely for his country.

PER ASPERA AD ASTRA:

A TALE OF LOVE, WAR, AND ADVENTURE.

CHAPTER XX.

THE IMPERIAL CHAMBER AT SPIRES, AND ITS PROCEEDINGS.

THE time during which Staelburg had been confined to the bed of sickness had been used to good advantage by the enemies, alike of himself and Hardfels. Würmer, with that tact which seemed never to desert him, had taken the preliminary steps for the impeachment of the latter; and the Imperial Chamber, to which belonged jurisdiction in such criminal cases as concerned the safety and welfare of the empire, had already set its cumbrous machinery in motion, with the view of executing justice on the delinquent.

To poor Hardfels, Butler's remark,

"Thus Justice, while she winks at crimes,
Stumbles on innocence sometimes,"

seemed singularly applicable; and the charge laid against him being one of great magnitude, and apparently well substantiated by evidence, the president of the Imperial Court and his assistants devoted their best energies to the solution of the matter. When the Count of Staelburg entered Vienna, that city was almost deserted by its fashionable inhabitants, who had attended their sovereign to Spire to await the decision of the learned of the land in the all-absorbing case before them. The official to whom the recent exile applied for admission to the Imperial presence was tempted to a breach of his gravity on learning Staelburg's ignorance of the subject. He, however, politely informed the applicant of the facts of the case, and added that, if his mission was of moment, he had better seek an audience of the Emperor at Spire. At this intelligence, the Count, in a maze

of bewilderment, took leave of the warder, and wandered up the street of the capital, to collect his thoughts and decide on the most advisable course to be adopted. Among the few persons he encountered, one there was whose stately figure and yet pale face he could not forget. The person in question was habited as one of the imperial equerries, but, notwithstanding his gay attire, his dejected appearance would have enlisted the sympathy of even the most anti-ceremonious republican. Staelburg seemed to be no stranger to him, and after regarding the young noble earnestly for a few seconds, a faint smile of recognition flitted over his wan features, as he passionately exclaimed: "My earliest and dearest friend! is it indeed you?"

Staelburg could not be mistaken: it was William of Hardfels he beheld—but so changed from the handsome, cheerful youth whom, but a few years since, he left at Kielsworth.

"My William, are you here?" said he, almost mechanically, as he affectionately embraced his friend.

A tear fell from the young Hardfels, as he replied in despondent accents: "Reprove me not; my place should be in the prison of my doomed father, to cheer him through the vale of misery he is traversing. Alas! my friend, they have sold innocent blood—the destruction of the guiltless is inevitable. My friend Karl remains at Spire, to bring me intelligence when the undeserved sentence is passed."

"Take hope!" said Staelburg;

"things are not so desperate as you may imagine. Let us lose no time in setting out for Spires; and who can say but that, by the time we reach it. He who judges rightly may have raised up some evidence of your unfortunate father's innocence?"

"Ah! messenger of hope!" said the wretched William; "breathe no such fallacious ideas into my mind. My father's doom is inevitable. His rank and apparent ingratitude will admit of no plea for mercy. I pray you, however, as you love me, use your influence with the Emperor, that he who will soon be no more may not die the death of a common felon."

"Have firmer trust in Him who pleads the cause of the innocent," responded Staelburg. "Let us obtain our horses immediately, that we may be at Spires ere the sitting of the court be terminated."

William shuddered as he answered: "Be it so; but probably ere we arrive, the tragedy will be completed, and Hardfels may have no more a lord—the son no more a father!"

"God forbid!" said Staelburg, cheerfully, almost tempted to reveal to William the full extent of his knowledge, yet dreading the effect of a sudden change from despair to joy on his excited friend. "But time passes, and at present each moment is of consequence. Some days must elapse before we reach our destination, however swiftly we may travel."

Horses were soon obtained at the young equerry's bidding, and in a short space of time the two friends—the one wrapt in deep melancholy, the other glad of having an opportunity of disclosing the mystery he had discovered—set out at a brisk pace for Spires.

"By what means," said William, when his spirits had become more revived, "did you obtain your recall to Germany? or has your blind affection for the persecuted prompted you, at any risk to yourself, to watch over our waning fortunes?"

"Nay, William, I can claim no

such chivalrous sympathy with you. I returned to Germany in consequence of the imperial revocation of the edict of banishment to which I was subject. I have, in more instances than one, detected well-laid schemes of the Würmers, and perhaps I may be of service on the present occasion."

"I thank you for the good-will you display towards my doomed father; but there is no room for hope of averting his fate."

Full of exaggerated ideas of the ruin pending over his house, William withstood all Staelburg's attempts at conversation, and mile after mile was passed in the same gloomy silence.

Relays of horses were everywhere placed at the disposal of the imperial equerry; and on the fourth day of their journey the friends found themselves at no great distance from Spires. As Staelburg was unacquainted with the route, William officiated as guide, and indicated with the utmost taciturnity the direction to be taken. At length the road appeared more familiar to the Count; but before he could call William's attention to the fact, he found his melancholy guide had come to a complete halt at a short distance before him.

"Look, Staelburg!" said William, pointing to the castle which had so long been his home, and of which, from its lofty position, a full view could now be obtained; "observe you not that? Do you not remember the many happy hours which, from our childhood upwards, have been spent within those walls? Now, alas! all goes from us; for this alone I would not grieve; but how can I endure to behold the escutcheon, which my ancestors have ennobled by deeds of valour, now defaced as that of a traitor to his God and country?"

Staelburg gazed with deep interest on the massive building above him. Not a tree seemed felled in the little wood surrounding it; the terrace remained in the state he left it; and the curiously ornamented gateway, through which he had so often passed, seemed in

no respect altered. Seeking to divert his friend's melancholy, he inquired whether it was William's intention to make a tarry at Hardfels.

The latter shook his head sadly: "No, Augustus," said he; "I will spare myself that ordeal. I may not see it again. But when the curse falls—for a curse will always attend ill-acquired wealth—perhaps some such person as your housekeeper, Kaisa, will survey its moss-grown battlements and falling tower, and tell her children of the injured Hardfels. I am the last of my race, and am thankful that there are none others to share the ignominy of the family. Let us go."

Dashing his spurs with unnecessary force into his horse's flanks, William proceeded on his journey, and it was not long before Spires was in view.

Meanwhile the court, in which the business of the empire was transacted, was crowded by the imperial courtiers, and others interested in the matter pending, the majority of whom, notwithstanding the thirst for novelty and excitement to which we are all so prone, felt a deep sympathy with the accused. In his prosperity, though stern and reserved, he had conducted himself with prudence and affability; and those who rejoiced in his fall were very few. His defence—though even his dearest friends could anticipate nothing but failure—was, at his special request, accepted by Herman Von Staelburg, uncle to our hero; and many of the former pupils of the experienced advocate lent their services. So far from feeling depressed by the Herculean task he had undertaken, the counsellor maintained a cheerful aspect, and informed his desponding client that he had seen many cases, presenting a less favourable appearance, terminate in a satisfactory manner. No stone was left unturned to promote so desirable an end; and Herman Von Staelburg's clear head was taxed to the uttermost for the benefit of Hardfels. The day in

question was the one when it was anticipated the proceedings would be terminated, and the fate of the prisoner ascertained.

The President of the tribunal sat in a canopied chair, while around him were the assistant judges, some sixteen in number, busily engaged in conning their notes, or entering into whispered consultations between themselves as to the effect of each additional feature of the evidence. Near the chief judge, but on a woolsack in no manner distinguished from those of the other officials of the court, was seated Maximilian II., the ruler over one of the most mighty monarchies of the earth, yet, adopting the behaviour of a disinterested spectator, rather than of a party deeply concerned in the matter at issue. Every eye was directed to the unhappy Hardfels, who met the steadfast gaze of the multitude without the least symptom of trepidation or guilt. His was a great and well-disciplined mind; his conscience accused him of no breach of duty to his sovereign; and his countenance, pale and wasted though it was, betrayed no feeling of shame—no sense of dishonour. Like Glaucus in the Pompeian arena, yet possessed of principles to which even the high-minded Athenian was a stranger, he met the glances directed towards him, not with a scowl of defiance, not with an expression of abject fear, but as conscious innocence should meet misled, but well-meaning judges. His spare figure, thin hair, and resigned mien, were sufficient to dispel any resentment from the hearts of those present; and the Emperor and the dispensers of justice, although entertaining little doubt of his culpability, could but pity as they heard. By his side was the indefatigable Herman, while his assistants were ranged about him.

In the place appropriated to the witnesses stood Conrad Würmer and his aged father, both clad in mourning, and both preserving an appearance of the greatest commiseration with him whom their

false testimony was consigning to unmerited ignominy. The fatal document, on which the prosecution was based, was placed in the hands of the President, and the younger Würmer awaited any questions he might be pleased to make thereon. Such, however, was the appearance of genuineness which the cunningly devised fable bore, and so glaring was the treason in the offer it contained of the throne of Germany to the false Charles IX., that the President was unable to throw out any doubts of the fact. He accordingly intimated to the prisoner's counsel that he was prepared to hear any evidence the latter might adduce to upset the letter in question.

The letter produced being the first of a contemplated series, no good could be done by calling on the party to whom it was really addressed to deny the receipt of any previous or subsequent suggestions on the subject; and the advocate's first question was, as Würmer had anticipated, by what means had a document of so much importance come into his possession?

To this, Würmer, according to his preconcerted plan, replied that a page in Hardfels' employ, known by the name of Gottlieb, had consulted him, without any apparent reason for so doing, as to the best course to be taken to Paris, where, he afterwards added, he was commissioned to take a letter; that in consequence of the air of mystery observed by the bearer, he was induced to request a sight of it, with which request the youth, who was not famous for over-keen intellects, complied. The address on it confirmed his suspicions as to some foul play being intended, and he then took the precaution of ascertaining the contents with which he had acquainted the court (in the presence of his father), after which he considered it necessary to retain the document.

With so ingenuous an air was this explanation given, that however Herman Von Staelburg might regard it as a fiction, it was

difficult for him to force his ideas on others. He therefore proceeded:

"Such a course must require urgent circumstances to justify it. But, admitting your tale to be correct, how came you, during so many years, to preserve so strict a silence on this head? Was it not your duty to warn the Emperor of the danger to which he was exposed?"

"I take shame to myself," said Würmer, "for my remissness. But to bring evil on the friend of my bosom was a most distasteful duty to me, and one which I sought by all possible means to avoid. Believing I had prevented the execution of the Baron's plot, I took no means to bring the traitor to justice. At length my conscience reproached me for concealment of so heinous a crime, and, unable longer to endure its stings, I determined to do my duty, however disagreeable, nothing doubting but that the justly excited wrath of my injured sovereign will pass on me some heavy sentence for my neglect." He paused, as if overcome by emotion, and tears rolled down his swarthy cheeks.

A voice in a remote corner of the chamber exclaimed: "How easy does duty become when interest and ambition urge it onwards!"

Würmer slightly blushed at these bold words, and the eyes of all were turned upon the speaker, who was discovered to be our old friend Godfrey, and who having, by the usual privilege of folly, obtained admission into the council-chamber, could not restrain the temptation to vent a sarcastic jest on the odious witness. The allusion to the motives which actuated the seemingly right-principled Würmer was hailed by a low murmur of approbation by the assembly; and although Godfrey was reproved for his forwardness, it was in a tone rather of encouragement than censure.

The advocate's face, which had hitherto brightened with a glow peculiar to a hopeful nature, and the consciousness of great abilities, became, in a measure, shaded, and

he appeared foiled by the seeming candour of the witness he was examining.

"But surely," he continued, "some previous suspicion must have induced you to enter with such zeal on so ordinary a subject as the transmission of a letter to Paris? Had you any reason to doubt the prisoner's fidelity to the State?"

"By no means," answered Würmer; "I always esteemed him as an honourable man and a good subject; and I can only express a hope that the Emperor's clemency may spare his life, and give him an opportunity of acknowledging and atoning for his error. The sole reason which induced me to attach importance to so commonplace an event was, that, having at the time to which I allude, serious thoughts of adopting the Protestant creed"—

"Certes, a valuable acquisition to any religion!" interposed Godfrey, in an audible whisper.

Würmer scowled with rage as he proceeded: "Having, as I before stated, great leanings towards the reformed faith, to which I knew the Baron of Hardfels was much opposed, I was not without some fear that the blessings religious concord secured to us by the accession of our beloved Emperor were about to be overclouded by the fanatical zeal of my friend. This presentiment, absurd as it may seem, took a strong hold on me, and subsequent events demonstrated its truth."

"Am I to suppose you devised no tale to deceive the Baron of Hardfels as to the safety of his letter?" observed the President, blandly.

"Nay, my lord," answered Würmer; "it is probable the page, for his own purposes, told some falsehood; but I was no party to it, and I took an early opportunity of informing the detected man of my knowledge."

"What effect did it produce on him?" continued the President.

"He was for a long time in a most excited state. When he became calmer, he besought me by

the love I bore him, to suppress my knowledge; and attempted to bribe me by large offers, including even the hand of his daughter in marriage, with a queenly dowry; but I was proof against his bribes."

At these words, Hardfels' countenance assumed a flush of anger, and some such word as "liar" passed him; but on reflection, considering his enemy's perjury only worthy of contempt, he allowed him to proceed.

"It is true," added Würmer, "that at one time the charms of the damsel exercised influence over me; but as she was by no means disposed to give me encouragement, I abandoned my ideas, scorning (had other motives failed to deter me from prosecuting my suit) to make the innocent daughter the sacrifice for the guilty father."

Many more questions were put to the crafty Conrad; but such was the ability with which he answered or evaded them, as suited best his purpose, preserving a show of great respect for justice, and a reluctance to implicate the accused, that his evidence remained unshaken. Probably ashamed of confessing the share which Würmer had had in Bertha's contemplated immurement in a cloister, the unfortunate Baron never mentioned the fact to his legal adviser; and, to his great satisfaction, Würmer escaped examination on that head. The old Count of Würmer was afterwards subjected to a searching scrutiny as to the knowledge he possessed of the mysterious affair; but no discrepancy of the slightest moment could be detected between his account and that of his son.

Herman Von Staelburg seemed entirely to have lost his wonted confidence; he looked careworn and anxious, and his concluding address, on behalf of his client, was not delivered with the boldness of one who doubts not to carry the feelings of his hearers with him. Nevertheless, it was pointed and eloquent; he aptly alluded to the few weak points in the witnesses' statements; the ease with which a

fraud might be perpetrated; the high character for political, as well as moral integrity, which the accused had borne; and called upon the judges, as they loved that justice which ever leans towards mercy, to give a guarded credence to the testimony they had heard.

At the close of his speech, the Emperor—the rapid workings of whose brow betrayed great mental agitation—rose from his seat, and fixing his piercing eye on the prisoner, said in a hollow voice:

“Hardfels, I have loved and trusted you as my own brother; tell me, as you value truth, is the document we have heard read your genuine act, or that of an enemy? The judges here present are certainly the arbitrators of the law; but for the personal satisfaction of one who is unwilling to believe you guilty of the black crime with which you are charged, speak boldly,—assure me you are innocent!”

“Your majesty may rely that my last hours will not find me deviating from the path of truth, in which I have hitherto unfailingly trod,” answered Hardfels, in a solemn manner. “I blame not those who would condemn me on the evidence brought against me; but as I must soon have to appear before another tribunal, I sincerely protest my utter innocence of the atrocious crime with which false witnesses have charged me. But the counterfeit is too well executed to admit of any hesitation in its reception by the judges of this court, and may not my blood be laid to their charge!”

The Emperor heaved a sigh, partly from a sense of relief at Hardfels’ assurance, and partly as if ashamed of his earnestness; and the assembled judges, apparently totally unmoved by his behaviour, consulted with each other on the decision to which the evidence would lead them. The friends of the prisoner in vain attempted to to assume an air of composure, for their faces could not conceal the gloomy view they took of the bearing of the court. Hardfels

alone remained calm and collected,—not a muscle winced; and the glances of triumph which the Würmers, now secure of their point, directed towards him, produced no effect. To him the bitterness of death was past; he only awaited the official ratification of the doom which his own judgment had pronounced upon himself.

The time approaches for the announcement of the judges’ decision, and all appears lost, if the Count of Staelburg do not forthwith give his important testimony on behalf of the accused.

The two friends had by no means relaxed their speed, and reached Spires as soon as the jaded condition of their horses would permit. All seemed life and activity in the ancient town. The noblest blood in Germany was contained within its walls, and the all-engrossing topic was eagerly discussed by the numerous idlers, both patrician and plebeian, in the streets. By these the anxious travellers were assured that all was over, and that sentence of death was passed on the prisoner. The way to the court-house being indicated, both hurried thither, in the fear that the news that they had heard was too true. Arrived at the chamber, the Count scarce demanded admission of the guard stationed at the door, but made a forcible entrance into the already densely crowded apartment.

The horrifying pause which had pervaded the court began to yield to a low hum of expectancy, as the President, having finished his conference with his assistants, prepared to deliver the judgment of the bench. Before, however, he could accomplish his purpose, a voice was heard near the door of the chamber, screaming, rather than exclaiming—“Stay, my lord! Hear me! hear me!”

The dead silence which had reigned in the assembly, preparatory to the sentence of the judges being promulgated, was broken by loud shouts of approbation and excitement, as one of the officers of the court made a way through the

crowd for the travel-stained Count of Staelburg to approach the witness-box. When order was at length restored, the President inquired of him what reason he had for making so great a disturbance.

"Read," said Staelburg, in a slightly imperious tone, "the deposition which I produce, and then condemn, if you can, the prisoner before you!"

Loud cheers followed this speech, and not all the labours of the energetic officials could prevail upon the multitude to suppress their enthusiasm. Among the chief of the rioters was our friend Godfrey, who, in defiance of all law and order, was gesticulating and declaiming violently.

For an instant, Würmer so far lost his courage as to yield to a tremulous inclination, as he beheld him of whom he thought he had effectually disposed, and ascertained the feelings with which he was regarded. He soon, however, divested himself of his trepidation, and observed, contemptuously—"Some artifice, of course, to defraud the scaffold of its victim!"

"You are mistaken," replied Godfrey, who had succeeded, amidst the din, in overhearing him: "one victim will be substituted for another, but otherwise the scaffold's right will be respected."

Having ascertained the purport of the document so suddenly produced, inquired of the witness whether he received it directly of the party whose signature was appended, and then submitted it to his fellows, the President said, in a tone of much satisfaction, "It appears to this court that, unless any cause can be shown why credit should not be given to the confession of one Diego Alvaro, now produced, acknowledging the forgery of the document on which this prosecution is based, the whole charge brought against William Baron of Hardfels falls to the ground, and he is adjudged altogether innocent of the crime of which he is accused! How say you, Conrad Würmer? do you ob-

ject to the admission of the deposition, in which, it appears, your name is mentioned as an accomplice?"

No answer was made, and but a minute later and young Würmer would have made a precipitate exit from the court. The Emperor, however, observing his movements, called to his guards to arrest him, and the gleaming halberds of the muscular soldiers soon frightened the wretched Conrad into submission.

"My Lord President," continued the Emperor, a smile of joy illuminating his noble countenance, "and you, my worthy counsellors, one task has been accomplished in direct conformity with justice, and in a most satisfactory manner to myself. One other thing remains to be performed, and then your arduous labours are brought to a close. I impeach the witnesses, on whose testimony the late prosecution was founded, of deliberate perjury; and I leave it to you to decide whether such is the case."

"And I," said a tall, well-formed man, in the attire of a forester, "lay a further charge against Conrad Würmer, of having, by subtle machinations, encompassed the life of Augustus Count of Staelburg, whom you have lately seen and heard!"

"And who may you be, to make so bold an assertion?" said the Emperor.

"I am known as Albrecht the brigand," replied the sturdy outlaw,—"a man at present under the ban of the empire, and who, had it not been for my proscription, might have made a similar charge in my own name. In proof of my charge, I tender a writing bearing the name of the accused."

Maximilian smiled at the brigand's fearless manner. "You are free," said he, "to give your evidence in the cause; and in consideration of the confidence you have placed in me, I revoke the ban under which you were laid." Then turning to the judges of the court, he continued—"Since no objection lies

to the admission of the confession you allude to, I think the decision you have arrived at is, that the Baron of Hardfels is a good man and a loyal subject, and, as such, is entitled to his release without the least aspersion being cast on his honour by the late proceedings—is it not so?"

The President bowed assent.

"I need make no further comment at present. Hardfels, you are a free man, and many apologies are due to you for the restraint in which you have been placed; tarry, however, until the termination of the next case, which, I trust, may not be a long one, and then I shall have a better opportunity of inquiring into this mystery."

The Baron showed no sign of triumph—no tendency to enthusiastic joy was visible in his stoical appearance; but, nevertheless, there reigned in his full eye an expression of silent thankfulness. He was about to pour forth his acknowledgments to the Emperor, but, at a signal from his sovereign, desisted. A warm grasp of the hand of his faithful counsellor showed how deep was the gratitude he felt towards him, and then all seemed as calm as if nothing had served to mar the serenity of his life. Reclining in a chair placed for him near the Emperor, he attended, without the slightest appearance of resentment, to the preparations which were making for the trial of his enemies.

"Conrad, Count of Würmer, and you, Conrad Würmer, son of the before-named," said the President, "in the name of the Emperor and the States, you stand charged with having in this court committed deliberate and corrupt perjury, whereby the life of an innocent man was endangered; and you, Conrad Würmer, are further accused of plotting the destruction of Augustus Count of Staelburg, here present. What answer have you to make to these several articles, and have you any request to make touching the manner of your trial?"

The old Count trembled visibly as he, in the most moving manner, denied the least participation in the forgery of the letter, the whole blame of which he, in right paternal fashion, ascribed to his son, but wisely forbore to allude to the false evidence he had given. The latter bestowed on his loving father a look of utter contempt. "I neither deny nor admit the facts mentioned in the declaration you refer to, nor the document lately produced by the robber. If you think fit to condemn me, let my doom be speedy. I require no assistance, and I demand none; neither have I any evidence to adduce. The old man's mind wanders, he speaks at random."

On a re-examination of the respective documents, the Count of Staelburg was again called upon to depose to the means by which he came into possession of the one previously adduced; and Albrecht gave a distinct account of the manner in which he acquired the other.

Unable to gainsay evidence such as this, Conrad Würmer preserved a dogged silence, and returned no answers to any questions put to him; and his disreputable father, seeing the degree in which he was implicated, adopted a tone of abject humility, confessed his crime, and loudly demanded mercy.

Once more the judges deliberated; but on this occasion their decision was soon arrived at, and, amidst an appalling stillness, the President passed sentence. As for the younger Würmer, his case, he observed, admitted of no mitigating circumstances; his guilt, in both instances, was clear; and it became the duty of the court to doom him to death. By the confession of the father, no doubt would remain of his culpability; but, in consideration of his age and infirmities, the court, although deeming his case deserving of extreme punishment, submitted it to the Emperor, for him to decide what the fate of the prisoner should be.

Loud signs of applause greeted

the noble speaker; and the Würmers, in their turn, became the objects of popular scrutiny. No sympathy was manifested towards them; and the assembly only awaited the Emperor's condemnation of the elder culprit.

Würmer sneered scornfully, as he looked round the court—not to excite commiseration, for such he loathed, but to call all to witness his imperturbability. His father presented an appearance of most perfect despair, as he stood, with clenched hands and staring eyes, in expectation of his doom.

"Prisoners," said the Emperor, an emphasis *malgré* himself being attached to the word, "you have been severally convicted of the charges brought against you. As to you, Conrad Würmer, your guilt being proved, I have only to state that I fully concur in the sentence pronounced on you; but the fate of the Count being left in my hands, after taking into consideration the facts of the case, I fear I can work no great mitigation of the sentence of death, which his crime deserves."

A piercing scream broke from the miserable Count, and it was evident, from the vacant roll of his eyes and the wild expression of his mouth, that his reason had sunk before the shock.

"Poor wretch!" continued the pitying Emperor; "his reason seems gone; let him be placed in confinement, where he can be well cared after, and perhaps he may regain possession of his faculties. As for the other prisoner, has he aught to say in arrest of judgment?"

"I give no mercy," said Conrad, ferociously, "and I ask none; neither would I accept it, if offered. I have played a deep game, and have been unsuccessful, and therefore do not object to pay the penalty with my blood. The only boon I crave is, that the execution of my sentence may be speedy. Death has no torments for the resolute. Stay!" he continued: "that it may be said of me that I did one thing savouring

of good, touch a spring at the bottom of the case in which I kept my neighbour Hardfels' letter,"—pointing to the article alluded to,—"and you will see a drawer, in which is a thing of some importance to a person here present. The miniature is that of one Matilda Haldenheim, whose son yon old idiot most shamefully defrauded. I might name the injured party; but I will disclose no more."

"Take him away!" said the Emperor, horrified at his apathy; "and do not fail to let him be attended by some minister of religion."

Würmer loudly laughed at this charitable injunction, and then, with a mock reverence to the court, suffered himself to be conducted, by an escort of the Emperor's guard, to the cell for the condemned; while the aged Count was removed to the apartment lately occupied by Hardfels, preparatory to his entering an institution for the insane.

When the council-chamber was rid of the crowd, the judges withdrew, having previously offered their hearty congratulations to the Baron of Hardfels on the issue of the trial; while a no less warm greeting took place between the newly liberated noble and him to whose exertions he owed his release. William of Hardfels, after having given vent to his delight in various eccentric manners, gently complained of the deception which his friend had practised in withholding from him the secret with which he was acquainted. A brief explanation of Staelburg's motives banished the assumed pique of the heir of Hardfels, and he added his warm thanks to those of his grateful father for the essential services rendered him. It was indeed a happy meeting; and Herman Von Staelburg, as he grasped his nephew's hand, could not but feel an uncle's pride.

"Ah, my Augustus," said he, "you see that all our skilful arguments have not nearly so much effect as your more matter-of-fact

way of deciding a question! But jesting apart, my lad, I rejoice to see you well, and, after so many perils, preserved to tread the free soil of our mother country."

Ere our hero could reply to his relative's friendly salutation, his attention was diverted from the subject by the production by the Emperor of the miniature he had extracted from Würmer's casket, and which, in the excitement occasioned by recent events, had been almost overlooked.

"Who can recognise these features?" said Maximilian, as he displayed the portrait to the gaze of the few persons who remained in the court.

For some time no one ventured an opinion; until Karl, who had attentively regarded it, exclaimed, with an eagerness which not even the presence of the Emperor could check, "My mother! I cannot be mistaken."

"By what name are you known, good youth?" said the Emperor, in a condescending manner.

Poor Karl's head swam, and it required some few seconds to rouse him to consciousness. At length he responded: "Ask others, my liege; I can only speak of the subject of yon miniature as a parent; her name was only recalled to me by the allusion made by the doomed Würmer."

"To whom, then, am I to look for an explanation?" remarked Maximilian.

This question was answered by the Count of Staelburg, who respectfully informed his sovereign that a lady, known by the name of Matilda Haldenheim, the widow of a wealthy landed proprietor, some fourteen years since, was reported to have died, committing her son, then little more than an infant, to the care of the old Count of Würmer; that, soon after, the child disappeared, or, at least, all tidings of him ceased; and that, thereupon, the faithless Würmer appropriated his property to his own use; and added his belief of Karl's identity with the missing lad.

"Of what age are you? and what Christian name do you say you bear?" inquired the monarch of Karl.

On receiving a satisfactory answer, the Emperor proceeded to say: "It appears to me, by the conviction of the Würmers, their possessions are forfeited to me, as the head of the State; and as I have little doubt that many of them are your property, I see no other method of adjusting matters than by dividing the estates of the condemned criminals between the worthy Count of Staelburg, the Baron of Hardfels, and yourself, as the parties most injured by these Würmers,—leaving it to you to make such division as may appear just."

Hardfels and Staelburg, with similar expressions of gratitude, simultaneously resigned every claim the imperial bounty might bestow upon them, in favour of the bewildered Karl, in whose behalf the excellent monarch ratified their resignations, observing: "You have my best wishes, young sir, for your prosperity and happiness in your restored position; but for so large a property a plain name scarce suffices. Kneel," he whispered; after which he added: "Arise, Sir Karl Haldenheim, and use your riches to better purpose than their late owner."

The unostentatious Emperor checked his thanks by turning to the Count of Staelburg, and politely inquired if he had not the pleasure of beholding one of his trusty subjects but lately returned to the realm.

"You are right, my liege! I have recently entered your dominions, and I at once repaired to your palace to present my humble thanks for the benefits your Majesty has so lavishly conferred on me. Accept, sire, my apologies for presenting myself before you in so soiled a garb."

"Tush!" said the Emperor. "Justice is blind, and considers not the persons, but the causes, of her votaries: no apologies are needed for entering into the pre-

sence of your monarch, who is proud of the society of his trusty friends in any attire. But let us know the circumstances attending your absence, into which my tattling jester has given me some insight, although how he obtained the information, I know not."

At his sovereign's bidding, the young noble proceeded to apprise him of the facts of the exile: but notwithstanding his studied reserve with respect to Hardfels' share in the matter, the Emperor contrived to elicit the real state of the case from him.

When he had concluded, the Emperor laid his hand mildly on the abashed Baron, and said: "Hardfels, my friend, was I such a tyrant in your estimation, that you preferred to make a sacrifice of your daughter and her hopes, rather than trust all to my judgment? your suspicion of me has brought you into jeopardy, and has produced pain in noble hearts: henceforth, act with greater confidence to me, and spare me the compunction of conscience I to-day experienced. 'Obsta principis,' my worthy counsellor."

At this ingenious speech, the Baron's lip twitched uneasily, and at length, unable to preserve his composure, he fairly burst into tears.

"There is yet one thing else to which I would allude," answered the Emperor: "this stout fellow"—pointing to Albrecht—"has displayed great earnestness in the cause of the right, and it is not fitting he should go without his reward. Say what can I do for you, my sturdy friend?"

"Your Majesty has already been more merciful to me than I deserve," answered Albrecht, frankly: "but during my proscription, I have contracted habits which ill associate with refined life. I fear that I should shine in no other capacity than a destroyer of deer. I have, moreover, a band of daring fellows under my control, who would consider my acceptance of any other appointment a desertion of them."

"Retain your roving habits, honest forester," replied the Emperor. "Do not quit your faithful followers: he who is faithful and true of speech can possess no depraved heart. The position of ranger of my forests is vacant; accept it, and let your associates occupy subordinate posts. Be as devoted in my service as you have been fearless in your own, and I am satisfied.—And now, my Godfrey," added he, turning to the jester, "in what way can I reward you for calling my attention to the danger menacing our worthy Count of Staelburg?"

"Most dread Liege and all-puissant Monarch," replied the jester, turning his eyes towards his sovereign with an expression of ludicrous humility, "contemplate the advantages of folly. Sitting near kings, often sharing their dignity with them, and presiding over their councils,—what can folly desire more? In fact, friend Maxilian, folly is above all remuneration, (certainly nothing but folly would decline it); and therefore I seek none. Listen to my ditty," continued he, as he sung, in a pleasant voice:

"See others and wiser
By rivalry rent;
With gossip and bauble
Behold me content;
For wisdom and wealth
But variance bring:
So, free from them both,
Of folly I sing."

"However exalted a position folly may bear in palace and court," said the Emperor, smiling at Godfrey's lay, "you must admit, Gossip Godfrey, that for once the Imperial Court has carried on its proceedings with no more folly attending them than that of which you are the owner. If we administer justice so wisely and speedily in all cases as in the present, you may as well resign your bauble. Folly will need no representative, on account of its holding supreme sway in person."

"And, if I resign, it will be in your favour, my friend," replied Godfrey. But this words passed

unnoticed, as the Emperor, courteously saluting Hardfels and his friends, left the council-chamber, beckoning Godfrey to follow him.

When the little party of friends were left to themselves, the Baron turned to the Count of Staelburg, and said :

"What apologies are due to you, my noble-minded friend, for the pain and danger I have occasioned you? Believe me, however, I acted as much out of regard for you as for myself. I told you, if you remember, that the time might come when I should receive your thanks for my apparently unjustifiable conduct. The enemy from whom I sought to preserve both you and myself can no more cause us alarm. You may now appreciate my motives, and pardon me. I fear you will miss one fond face, whose absence from our circle, is in consequence of some conspiracy of our common enemy. Would that she could be restored to us, and then would my cup of happiness be full!"

Notwithstanding Staelburg's sympathy with the father's feelings, he could not forbear from a smile, as he looked to Albrecht for an explanation.

"Excuse me, my lord," said Albrecht; "persons lost have been found, and it is not improbable that, by the time you reach Kielsworth, a stranger may be visible."

"God be thanked!" observed the Baron, heaving a deep sigh, "if I may be allowed again to behold my dearest daughter. But permit me to ask, what plot led to her abduction?"

"Of this we will speak hereafter," said the Count; "suffice it now to say that, having been concerned in a plot to deceive you, I waive my right to demand any further explanation of your proceedings; and henceforth let bygones be bygones."

"With all my heart!" said Hardfels. "Let us now repair to Kielsworth, and test the accuracy of your friend's assertion. My friend Herman, Sir Karl, and you, Albrecht, will accompany us."

The two former accepted the invitation; but Albrecht, pleading the necessity of his presence to perfect certain arrangements, started in advance; and soon the late crowded court was without an occupant.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH, ACCORDING TO ESTABLISHED PRACTICE, A HAPPY CONCLUSION IS BROUGHT TO OUR TALE.

By the time the Baron and his friends reached Kielsworth, they were met by Albrecht, who heartily welcomed the former to the home of his ancestors. There was no need of a blast of the horn to summon the porter to admit the party. All the domestics were assembled in the courtyard, and their cheerful faces and respectful acclamations testified their joy at the return of their lord. As the Baron addressed some kind word to each, he hurried onwards to the door of his mansion, which was opened by his long-lost daughter; and Bertha, half smiling, half weeping, was locked in her father's arms. A tear stood in Hardfels' eye, as he kissed his daughter's fair forehead, and invoked a blessing on her head. The happy father would not, however, monopolise all Bertha's affections, and a lover-like greeting took place between the delighted Staelburg and his blushing mistress. The introduction of Herman Von Staelburg, and Karl in his new character, was accomplished in due form; and then Hardfels insisted on Albrecht giving an account of the *ruse* practised.

The Ranger—such we may now term our old acquaintance—gave a clear explanation of the means by which he deceived the crafty Würmers, and added, that as the intelligence of his father's arrest, which he was unable to conceal from Bertha, had rendered her extremely anxious as to his fate, he had confided her to the care of Kaisa at Staelburg Castle, whence, on learning the intention of the Baron to return homewards, he had brought her to Hardfels. The happy means which resulted in the Baron's ac-

quittal were, of course, not withheld.

A very cheerful time was spent at Hardfels Castle by the now united family, and their pleasure was intruded upon by no sorrow.

An early day was appointed for the marriage of Bertha with our young hero, and the ceremony was performed by Father Clement, in the presence of numerous friends of both families; and, in addition to a handsome dowry with his daughter, the Baron bestowed on his son-in-law several valuable estates which had belonged to his father, and which, the generous donor insisted, were the fruits of his economy in the management of Staelburg's property.

To conclude in the orthodox manner observed by most writers of fiction, from infantine productions upwards, we may add, that Staelburg Castle was the scene of much happiness, and that great unity prevailed between its proprietor and the new Lord of Rockenforth. We cannot forbear from informing the reader that our punctilious acquaintance, the steward, made a warm appeal in favour of the employment of a special chaplain to attend to the spiritual wants of the family, quoting for his authority the example

of all the previous owners of the estate; but as Staelburg's reverence for many of the dignitaries of the Romish Church had been much shaken by the clear view his exile had given him of them, good Father Clement took up his residence alternately at either place, and gave great satisfaction.

In justice to ourselves, we must further state, that so much did their lord's adventures interest both Kaisa and the steward, that from the time of his return, all tales, however relating to Maurice or Adelbert de Staelburg, invariably terminated with an allusion to Augustus "the Exile;" and that it is only owing to our exertions that the legend of Adolphus of Hurlzbad was rescued from oblivion.

Würmer underwent his fate with the same sullenness which had marked him during his trial, being, however, considerably cheered by the news that a similar doom awaited his ally Ruffo, who had been arrested for some murder he had committed. As to the old Count, he spent the remainder of his days in a house of Bethlehem, occasionally, in his ravings, horrifying his attendants by the revelation of some deed of oppression or cruelty.

SEEING COMPANY.

PERSONS upon hospitable thoughts intent, cannot refrain from giving parties, notwithstanding that they may not have the command of the material for the production of an agreeable entertainment, or the talent to make the best use of that which chances to be at their disposal. Even in London, we are often condemned to ill-assorted associates, to dulness, and to formality; but miseries of this nature are nothing amidst the varied society of the metropolis, in comparison with what they become in the narrow social circles of some of our old-fashioned English country towns. I do not know any place in which the practice of "seeing company" is at once so distressing and amusing as in the borough of Singleton, in which there are a number of well-connected maiden ladies, possessed of some fortune, who live in lonesome houses with brick-fronts, green outside blinds, and brass knockers on the doors. These venerable spinsters are much addicted to seeing company, and give solemn tea-drinkings of the most awful description. These entertainments, which, by the coterie assembled, go by the almost obsolete name of "drums," consist of cards, whist and cassino for the elder, and some round game for the younger guests, whose evil stars have condemned them to the severe tax of attendance. The latter table is usually surrounded by eight or ten misses in faded dinner dress, or tawdry ball-room attire, any thing being considered good enough for the occasion; so there they sit, in faded gauzes, soiled silks, and crushed wreaths of artificial flowers, each inwardly rejoicing that nothing better had been wasted upon so dismal an affair. Tea and coffee, succeeded in due form by weak negus and sweet cakes, handed round by two servants, the footman and the coachman, or the footman of a friend, or

a hired waiter, as the case may be, make up the meagre entertainment, and at an early hour there is a general move. The guests depart in bad spirits and bad humour, the winners at cards only excepted. But, occasionally, some little incident occurs, which gives quite a different turn to the routine of procedure.

"I wish, my dear Bella," said a considerate matron to her daughter, "that you would make up your mind to go to Miss Clutterbuck's to-night, she seemed so particularly anxious to see you; and one really should make some sacrifices for an old friend." "Dear mamma," returned the young lady, "but what a sacrifice! it is really quite appalling to hear the sound of one's own voice, for there is positively an echo in that large drawing-room; and I am always obliged to think of something very clever to say, because I know that the last word will be repeated, and perhaps the whole sentence, if the deaf aunt should come down, who never sees a lip move without insisting upon knowing what it has uttered." "It is very tiresome, to be sure," observed Mrs. Harrison; "but she made such a point of it, and I am so unwilling to offend; besides, I cannot help thinking, from her manner, that she has some particular inducement: and then, you know, you might have been sorry to have missed it." "Oh, that is mere art," replied Miss Bella, "depend upon it, just to allure us into the trap, and then she will pretend that she expected somebody who has disappointed her. I cannot entertain the least hope of the kind; but, however, to oblige you, mamma, I will go, although I had much rather stay at home and darn an old stocking." This point gained, Mrs. Harrison endeavoured to achieve another. "And now, pray Bella, put on some pretty half dress. This old

blue satin, which you keep for such visits, is really perfectly disgraceful; you don't look yourself in it, for it never was a becoming thing, and now its quite out of fashion." "Good enough, my dear mamma, depend upon it; and, besides, how am I to wear it out? it is not fit for a lining, nor for any thing, indeed, except a party at Miss Clutterbuck's. If I go, the blue satin must go also; I cannot victimise my dresses and myself too." "Then I will purchase it of you, my dear; for really I have a presentiment that you ought to look well to-night." Bella laughed; and, having succeeded in selling her old gown to great advantage, she got into good humour, although very far from participating in the hopes and expectations of her more sanguine parent. Being a girl of honour, she bestowed some pains upon her toilette, and appeared to great advantage in new white muslin and pale pink ribbons. Upon entering the drawing-room, the usual party were assembled in the usual dresses. There was the white tabinet, which looked as if it had been up the chimney; the badly dyed satin, showing streaks of another shade; and the ragged blonde trimmings, too far gone to be cleaned again. Bella grudged her new dress, and wished that she could have persuaded her mother out of the blue satin, for that night only. There was, however, a smile of suppressed exultation on the lips of Miss Clutterbuck, which assured Mrs. Harrison that she had not been altogether wrong in her conjectures, and the event justified her opinion. The door suddenly opened, and without any announcement, a gentleman walked in, who appeared to be quite at home; the back of the hostess happened to be towards him at the time, so that the whole of the party obtained a full view of this interesting stranger before they could form the slightest idea of who he could be. He had not advanced beyond the middle age; his appearance was in his favour, inasmuch as he boasted a good figure, an agreeable counte-

nance, and the look of a gentleman. A certain self-possession, and a decided manner, were set down by all the company for a military air. Nor were the parties who cherished this idea mistaken. The lady of the house, turning round, observed the new arrival, and taking him by the arm, introduced him to her guests as her nephew, Major Clutterbuck, of the Bengal army. The major looked admiringly at Miss Harrison, and Mrs. Harrison gazed triumphantly at her daughter; the new white muslin and the pale pink ribbons gave her a decided advantage over her companions. Miss Barlow wished the dyed satins in the hands of the dyer again; Miss Gregson turned pale at the sight of her dirty tabinet; and Miss Dawkins could have torn the ragged blonde off her own shoulders with her own hands. All the others felt a consciousness of being particularly shabby, and, but for Bella's previous ill humour and lamentations over the unprofitable expenditure of her milliner's talents, would have fancied that she had been in the plot against them.

Major Clutterbuck soon evinced a discrimination which showed that becoming garments were not thrown away upon him; he attached himself to Bella all the evening, and left little doubt upon the minds of the spectators that she had achieved a conquest. Nor was the new arrival the only surprise of this eventful night; at eleven o'clock, just as the less agreeable engaged portion of the company were beginning to think that the refreshments were retarded to an unusually late hour, the announcement of supper struck them with pleased amazement. To the old folks, the gratification it bestowed came without alloy, but the young ladies secretly reproached their hostess for the concealment. They always thought it worth while to dress for a supper; and had they known the liberal intention of the mistress of the feast, they would have made a proportionate return. Major Clutterbuck assisted his aunt to do the honours; he seated

himself at the bottom of the table, placing Bella at his right hand. As may be surmised, it was to him that the company assembled were indebted for the solid portion of their entertainment; he would not hear of tea-and-turn-out; such things were never done in India; and, though only arrived that morning, he had contrived to make new arrangements in the whole establishment. In the first place, possessing all the peremptoriness which is acquired by a residence in the East, he gave his opinions so decidedly, that few thought of contradicting or opposing them; and Miss Clutterbuck, feeling exceedingly proud of a visit from a person of so much consequence, thought that she never could do enough to render her house agreeable to him. Her importance became instantly very great indeed, and invitations poured in upon her on all sides; instead of waiting for three months before they thought of a return for the hum-drum hospitalities of the spinster, her guests now entreated her to keep herself disengaged for an evening in the ensuing week, on which they hoped to have the pleasure of seeing her *and the Major*. If Miss Clutterbuck suspected the motive for these extraordinary civilities, it did not prevent her from availing herself of them; she was fond of society, proud of being able to say that she was never allowed to be a night at home; but, unfortunately, neither being agreeable herself, nor the cause of agreeability in others, she suffered from neglect. She wanted the peculiar tact, which, when people are congregated together, can make them enjoy each other's society: she could think of nothing to render her house attractive. Perhaps a little stinginess was at the bottom of this, for better fare would have brought young men, and young men would have brought smiles and unfaded garments; but she gave what other people gave, and was then surprised that her parties should go off so flatly.

Major Clutterbuck's arrival made a great difference. Warmed by an extra glass or two of some fine old wine produced for the occasion, Mr. Gosling, who, though old, had certainly never grown beyond his name, ventured upon a speech which had answered the same purpose for the last fifty years, and which, though of the most commonplace description, gave the major an opportunity to reply. The stranger being no mean orator, commenced in a most Othello-like manner, with a glance at the numerous adventures by flood and field which had characterised his adventurous career, and with even greater effect than that produced by the gallant Moor; for all the young ladies present felt inclined to love him for the dangers he had passed. Bella Harrison alone, happily for her mother's hopes, had the opportunity of assuring the hero of the evening of her sympathy; and as the heart of a returned Anglo-Indian is very easily caught, the charms of her person, the agreeableness of her manners, and, moreover, the simple elegance of her dress, made an impression which the improved appearance of her fair companions, on subsequent occasions, failed to erase. The mother and daughter returned home exceedingly well pleased with the prospects which the evening held out; they were certainly attached to each other but the idea of parting, perhaps for ever, did not occasion the dread and dismay which such a separation might be supposed to create. So anxious are mothers to marry their daughters, and so anxiously do daughters desire to arrive at the state and dignity of matrons, that they overlook all the miseries which may accrue from a step from which there is no retreat; but as marriages are essential to the well-being of society, this is probably a wise dispensation of nature.

Next day Major Clutterbuck called to pay his respects to Mrs. and Miss Harrison, and though divers attempts were made to

seduce him from his allegiance, they did not succeed. If he were asked without the Harrisons, a manoeuvre practised by families who affected to hold them in contempt, he either did not go, or maintained so rigid a silence, that the party were not in the slightest degree enlivened by his presence; and perceiving that there was no remedy, the candidates for matrimony in the town were obliged to submit to the better fortune of Bella Harrison with a good grace, and be content to see her carry off a prize which did not often fall to the lot of the borough of Singleton. Short courtships are the fashion in the East; and as Major Clutterbuck considered the customs of Bengal to have been established by the quintessence of human wisdom, he not only followed them himself in England, but obliged everybody else, over whom he possessed any influence,

to do the same. Preparations, therefore, for the marriage, were speedily commenced. Mrs. Harrison went about amongst her friends, exulting and lamenting at the same time; at one moment expatiating upon the settlements, jewels, and carriages, which her daughter would be so fortunate as to possess; at the next, bewailing the necessity of the major's return to India. Then she showed Cashmere shawls, Trichinopoly chains, and pearl necklaces, to her visitors, who, aware that all these costly things had been purchased by a white muslin dress and pale pink ribbons, marvelled much at Bella's luck. In due time the heroine of the white muslin dress and pink ribbons was united to the major, and by the latest accounts from India, they are represented as living in great harmony, and both alike thankful for the accident which threw them together.

MY FRIEND BROMELY.

ONE dull snowy morning in January, while sitting at breakfast in my lodgings in a dull street in London, I received the following note:—"Dear Harry, I am confined to bed—very unwell—come and see me—immediately.—Yours always, T. BROMELY."

This was very laconic. I had seen Bromely a few nights before at the opera in high spirits, and apparently in good health. I was rather surprised, therefore, at the import of the card, but thinking that it might be some trifling indisposition, I finished my breakfast and my newspaper before setting out to call. I found myself about one o'clock at his lodgings, and, on inquiring of the footman how his master was, I learned that he had been confined to bed two days, and was still unable to rise. I entered the chamber, and having shaken hands, began to give the customary consolations—hoped "that the illness was trifling," and so on; but after I had become familiar with the gloom of the apartment, which was darkened, and could distinguish objects properly, I was struck with the change which had taken place in his countenance. To be sure, there must always be a great difference in a man's appearance when he exchanges the gilding of a fashionable exterior for the paraphernalia of a sick-bed; but even after making allowance for this, I thought I discovered symptoms of a serious malady. The worst part of the affair was the utter prostration of mind which he had experienced, for he hardly appeared to listen to what I said; and on inquiring what physicians he had consulted, he answered, "None; it was of no use." I, of course, told him of the madness, the folly of this, and said I would bring Dr. Berkely with me at four o'clock, though I hoped that by that time he would be better.

"To tell the truth," said he, sud-

denly, "I am afraid to hear the sentence of a physician, for fear of having my suspicions confirmed; but I dare say it is the best way to be resolved at once. Do bring him. Pray, what day of the month is this, Harry?"

"The sixth," I answered.

"Is it?" he exclaimed, with an earnestness which made me start. "Harry, I *must* be well by the twelfth."

I told him if there was anything I could do for him on that particular day, I would do it with pleasure.

"No, no, no!" he answered, impatiently; "I must be out myself. What is to be done? You cannot imagine the horrid necessity for my being out on that day, and I can't tell you."

I tried to make him explain what he seemed so anxious about, but he was impatient of the subject; and seeing I only irritated him by inquiries, I ceased to press them, and took my leave. It was evening before I saw Dr. Berkely. The rain was pouring in torrents, and it was pitchy dark. We drove to Bromely's, and I entered the chamber along with the doctor, who, seating himself by the fireside, put the usual medical questions, felt his patient's pulse, wrote a prescription, and was about to move off.

"One moment, doctor, if you please. I shall be obliged to you, if, for once, you will lay aside your professional caution, and speak out. What is the matter?"

The doctor hesitated; said that at present he could not say with certainty what was the matter; would call to-morrow; hoped it was only cold; recommended quietness; and desired him to keep his mind free from alarm, as probably there was not much to apprehend.

Bromely was dissatisfied, but the doctor would not speak out. I took my leave along with him, and,

on parting, inquired if he feared anything very bad; and though he gave me no explicit answer, I was satisfied he considered the matter serious. He went to visit his patients, and I went to the opera. In the glitter of the performance, I forgot Bromely and his illness.

Another note next morning. It ran thus: "Dear Harry, I have had a miserable night, and am wretched. Do come and see me; it will be a charity," &c. The note was hardly legible, and had been written evidently in violent agitation. In half an hour after the receipt, I was in his chamber. He was looking miserable, but seemed rejoiced when I entered.

"You must think me very selfish in boring you thus," said he; "but if you knew how miserable I am when alone, I am sure you would not grudge me an hour of your society."

What could I do? Of course I was obliged to say, that, if my presence gave him any satisfaction, I would remain with pleasure.

"No, no, no!" he answered, quickly. "I know very well no one would prefer being here to enjoying himself in his own way, but I shall accept of your kindness for all that."

I offered to read to him, but he declined; and, accordingly, I was obliged to keep up a conversation which was anything but enlivening.

The doctor called, and having ascertained the state of his patient, wrote another prescription, and was about to retire.

"Pray sit down, doctor," said Bromely, "and do me a favour."

The doctor took a chair, and looked at his watch, as much as to hint that his time was precious.

"Oh, it will be your own fault if you be detained, doctor. Answer me a very simple question: I am determined to know, and I have a reason for it—if you will not tell me, I shall just call another physician, who may not be so scrupulous—am I in for a fever?"

The doctor nodded assent.

Bromely sank back on his pillow

at this confirmation of his suspicions, and was silent for some time. He seemed greatly agitated.

"How long," at last said he, "how long, doctor, may it take to set me up again; that is, supposing I recover?" and he looked rather wildly in his face.

"It is really impossible to say, Mr. Bromely. At present, I assure you, I can have no idea, and the less you think about it the better."

"But I may be out by the twelfth?"

"Impossible!" answered the doctor.

I shall not soon forget the look the sick man gave when he received this laconic answer. Impatience and despair seemed to agitate him fearfully.

"Doctor Berkely, come what may, you *must* and *shall* enable me to be out on that day. I think I could walk about just now."

He made an effort to raise himself in bed, but a sudden sickness came over him, and, with a groan, his head again sought its pillow.

"Doctor," said he, after a pause, "could you give me such a draught as would enable me to go out for an hour or two? I care not how much I suffer as the consequence. I know," continued he, "you can prolong life at times, though you cannot save it. Come, doctor, have you such a medicine?"

"Mr. Bromely, this is foolish. Forgive me, it is sinful. You must not think of going out. I can give no such medicine as you ask. For your own safety, I advise you to compose yourself. Do not think of leaving your bed."

Bromely was suddenly silent, and seemed to be engaged in painful reflection. The doctor departed, promising to call again in the evening. A considerable time elapsed before he broke silence; and when he did so, I thought the tone of his voice had altered considerably. His look was fierce: I thought the fever had gone to his brain.

"Harry," said he, "I don't care for Berkely's opinion. Doctors

have their creed, and they must stick to it for the sake of consistency. If disease be in my system, how can outward circumstances affect me? What does it matter whether I lie, or sit, or walk? Besides, I recollect an anecdote of a soldier in a retreat, who kept his saddle for a week, and the man had a malignant fever on him. What is there, then, to hinder me from going out for an hour? Harry, once for all, I must be out on the twelfth, and you must assist me."

"What is the meaning of this nonsense?" I exclaimed impatiently, for I had almost lost my temper at his folly—"what *can* there be that so imperiously demands your presence, at the risk, nay, the certainty of your death, being the consequence? It is absurd to talk of moving from your room; and I certainly shall not assist in any such mad attempt."

I was frightened at the expression of his countenance. He was generally an open-hearted and most kind-hearted being, but his look was now dreadful to behold; and when he spoke, though he trembled with passion, the words came slowly and distinctly.

"Hear me, Harry: I am fixed in my resolve to be out by the twelfth, and what is more, you *shall* assist in that very mad attempt."

He laughed; but such a laugh! I was terrified. I was afraid that he was deranged—was in a state of raving madness.

"Well," said I, with the view of soothing him, "we shall see how you are on that day, and then"—He interrupted me. "Oh, yes; try and soothe me like a child! Yes, we *shall* see on that day." And he was silent.

Days rolled on, and still the same wild determination remained, and every day only saw his resolution become stronger, if possible. He laughed at bodily pain, philosophised upon it, made me read medical books upon fever and delirium, and reasoned upon them as abstract speculations; always end-

ing by repeating his fixed resolution to be out on the twelfth.

It was on the evening of the eleventh that I was sitting with him. He was in a state of high excitement, and talked of going out to-morrow as a thing of course—said I must go with him in a coach, and implored my acquiescence in tones which distressed me. I had hitherto refrained from contradicting him, as I thought the irritation caused by my opposition made him worse; but now I thought it was high time to tell him my mind, and did so. I represented to him as strongly as possible the madness, the impossibility of his going out—nay, more, that force was to be used to compel him to remain in bed if he persisted in the attempt—and tried by every means in my power to dissuade him from it. He heard me with perfect quietness, though with impatience. When I had finished, he made no answer, but, to my astonishment, got out of bed, threw a dressing-gown about him, walked firmly across the room, and, opening a drawer, took out a pair of dumbbells, and having exercised them in the usual way for about a minute, put them back in their place, and returned to bed.

"Every night," said he, "since I have been confined, I have done this; and as long as I can do it, no one shall persuade me that I can't go out; and, as for force," continued he, "look here!" He opened a case which lay at the back of his bed, and produced a pair of pistols, nodded significantly, and replaced them. It was in vain to remonstrate. I still, of course, thought the necessity of his being out existed only in his imagination, and I determined to take serious measures for his confinement. At night I easily got possession of the pistols.

Next day I called, as he had made me solemnly promise to do. He had discovered that the pistols had been taken away, and I expected a violent scene, which I was prepared for. I was mistaken, however. He lay a few minutes

perfectly silent; and when he spoke, he did so slowly and mildly.

"Harry," said he, "are you determined to assist me in going out to-day — for an hour or two—?" I shook my head. "When I assure you," continued he, calmly, "when I assure you that my honour, and the honour of my family—nay, that my life depends upon it?"

I was astonished at the calmness and firmness with which he spoke, but I was determined not to give way. "Bromely," said I, "once more for all, I will not be accessory to your death, and it is idle to say another word about it."

"Well," said he, "I have now no alternative but to speak out. Is the door shut?" I answered in the affirmative. "Come near me." I approached the bed.

He moved his lips two or three times as if he had been about to speak, but his tongue refused to perform its office; a flush spread over him as he raised himself on one arm, and looking me steadfastly and sternly in the face, whispered,

"Harry, I HAVE FORGED A BILL!"

I forget what exclamation I made. I sat down by the fire, and was silent for some time. I knew that he was watching every motion, but I knew not what to say. I was thankful that he spoke first, though bitterly.

"Well," said he, "you know all, and I suppose are thinking of a decent excuse for shaking me off. And the truth is, Harry, though you should go this instant, I shall not blame you."

"You wrong me," I said; "but what on earth could have tempted you to such an act of madness?"

"What could tempt me? Do you recollect the night we were at Mallet's, some months ago, when I won eight hundred pounds from young Denson? You won from him yourself, Harry. I thought he was rich. He left the table that night not worth a farthing. A fortnight afterwards, I learned that his boy was lying dead in his house, and he had not the means of bury-

ing him; that his wife was distracted, and that he was starving. At that moment there was an execution or some such thing going on in the house for £1,000. What could I do? I had not the money. I had been a cause of his ruin. I forged a bill upon old Denham for £1,500, and gave Denson the money. I expected to have been in funds long before this, but have been disappointed. The bill is due on the 13th—you see I am a correct man of business—and unless it be taken up to-day, all must come out to-morrow; and you remember the fate of Dr. Dodd—it will be mine. Now, will you lend me a hand?"

"With all my heart," said I, "but how? I have not half the money."

"God bless you, Harry! I'll get the money. But then I must make another confession."

"To whom?" said I.

"To my sister Jane, Lady Dashley."

"Will Lady Dashley give you money?"

"Will she not, and the honour of the family at stake? Come, assist me to rise."

I did get him out of bed, and his clothes on. He fainted once, and I gave up all for lost; but he recovered, and his resolution was as strong as ever. I had almost to carry him to the coach, and, when seated there, had to support him from falling. By the time we had approached Lady Dashley's, he rallied; and though I trembled for the result, he went out firmly, but deadly pale, and walked into the house. I was left in no enviable state. A quarter of an hour passed away, and no tidings; another quarter had nearly been measured, when a servant came out, and requested me to walk in. I was shown into a parlour, where Bromely was lying on a sofa. His sister, Lady Dashley, was at a writing-desk, and evidently dreadfully agitated; there was no time for salutations; she advanced to meet me.

"You know this dreadful business. Here is a draft on Coutts for

the amount. I know there is not so much, but I daresay they will not refuse; at all events, you must try. Hasten; let me know the moment you get the business finished."

Bromely was too much exhausted to go with me. I bolted into the coach, gave the driver a sovereign to drive with all the speed he could—presented the cheque at Coutts's; it was shown to one of the partners. I was in a dreadful state of suspense; but it was passed. I got the money, and drove at equal speed to the bank at which the bill was payable. I alighted, and, for the first time, hesitated. I was in a state of considerable agitation, and I must appear calm to prevent suspicion. After pausing a few minutes to recover myself, I walked calmly into the telling-room of the bank, and asked, as coolly as possible, for Mr. Denham's bill.

There was no such bill. I recollected in an instant that it was due on the morrow. I mentioned this,

and added that it would be obliging if they would take payment of the bill to-day. It was got and paid, and in my possession. My feelings must have betrayed me when I had the fatal document in my hand, for the clerk did look suspicious. However, it was in my possession, and I was again at the coach in an instant. Driving with the former rapidity, I was at Lady Dashley's door in a twinkling. I rushed up stairs, and found the parties as I had left them. Neither had power to utter a syllable.

"There is the bill," said I, putting it in the fire.

I never witnessed such a relief to two human beings. It is impossible to record the lady's thanks and Bromely's gratitude. I got him to his lodgings. He was dreadfully ill for months, and raved continually of bills, and banks, and felony, but he recovered.

HE HAS NOT TOUCHED CARD NOR DICE-BOX SINCE.

A WOMAN'S MIRACLE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MAKING THE BEST OF AN OPPORTUNITY.

It was no use; a blow had been struck at hearts disposed to be joyous and merry. Sir William did his best, and Mr. Burchell ably seconded him, to keep up the spirits of his guests; but, somehow or other, Judith's illness, and the mystery hanging to it, had extinguished every spark of joy, and the meeting, which at one time was animated with pleasure, had now subsided into that peculiar silence that amounted to gloom. Even Ralph the miller, who had been getting a little mellow and talkative with much ale and wine, became mute and grave; and the jovial fire of his eye—ah! not a gleam of it was there now. He sat at the feasting table between his dame and Sir William's steward. After Mr. Shaw had been summoned to his sick daughter, the three, over a black bottle of rare old port, formed themselves into a little party. He was very fond of Judith—indeed, poor girl, she was the village favourite—and when the news broke upon the meeting that she was worse, and that her father was to hasten to her, it took all the glow of the bee's-wing out of Ralph's elated pate; and he thrust his thumbs in the armholes of his richly-watered silk vest, ornamented with a gold chain conspicuous for its size—dropped his fat double chin on his sturdy chest—blew out his cheeks that were ruddy red with hardwork, content, and early rising, and prophetically shook his head, which was covered with short-cropped light hair, his sharp little hazel eye scrutinising the folks at the cross table.

Ralph's perceptions were lively enough to perceive that Sir William, for the sake of his guests, was doing his utmost to hide his feelings, while it was quite as obvious to the honest miller that

Mr. Burchell and Mrs. Sargood had none to conceal. What cared they about Judith or Eustace, or anything but money, or anybody but themselves? Their sympathy with Sir William about his son, and with Mr. Shaw about his daughter, came from no deeper source than the lips, which uttered nothing but cold courteous commonplaces, too much of which in this superficial world passes current for heartfelt sympathy. Even while the worldly pair spoke to Sir William their "deep regret," their "unbounded sorrow for the untoward events that had lent a sadness to his princely hospitality," Ralph could not help seeing them coquette with their eyes, and the thoughts of Mr. Burchell were evidently more occupied to select for the charming widow the best peach the table afforded, and while he secretly longed for the opportunity of an uninterrupted *tête-à-tête* with her.

The miller withdrew his gaze from the top to the bottom of the table—there were the school children grouped on forms, and there Ralph saw real sorrow, and in many an eye stood a glistening tear. Judith in that group was sincerely mourned for, even to the forgetfulness of the bright new shillings with which Sir William had lined their pockets.

"Come, Ralph, don't let the bottle be idle while your glass is empty," said the Master of Greatlands.

"I'm much obleeged, Sir William," said the miller, bowing his head; "but I've had enough, and more than enough is neither good for man or beast, to my thinking. But I'm glum-like, since the news of poor Judith, that if I was to take all the wine in your cellar I don't think it would rouse me."

"Make a beginning of the cellar, Ralph, by cracking another bottle, and get your friends at the table to help you."

"I shall never get him up Pether-edge Hill, if he takes any more wine—that I'm sure of," said the miller's spouse.

"Were you speaking to me or my wife, Sir William?" inquired Ralph, much annoyed that Mrs. Roberts should cast such a slur on his character—for in the main Ralph was a very temperate man, and his wife knew this.

"Oh, a man and his wife are one," said Mr. Burchell.

"I don't 'zactly admit that, Muster Burchell," observed the miller.

"You think with me, dont'ee, Ralph," said the good-tempered dame, "that a man and his wife are two halves-like, but the wife is the better half."

This pleasant sally of the miller's wife created a little merriment on the faces of all present, and even Ralph himself became animated with smiles and laughter.

"I don't think no such thing," said the miller; "you know my opinion about women and wives—that they are——"

"The dearest creatures on the face of the earth," quickly said Mr. Burchell, supplementing what Ralph was about to say to the disparagement of women; and further, to the miller's confusion, and to the delight of Mrs. Sargood, who took so much of it to herself, he quoted the following beautiful lines from Otway:—

"O woman! lovely woman! Nature made thee
To temper man; we had been brutes without you.
Angels are painted fair to look like you;
There's in you all that we believe of Heaven—
Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love!"

While Mr. Burchell recited these lines, his eye was constantly on the widow, who blushed, and smiled while she blushed.

"Yes," said the miller's wife, bringing the conversation from the regions of poetry, back into real life; "yes, and woman can bake, and brew, and sew, and wash—"

"And scold, and gossip, and

spend money faster than men can earn it," said Ralph, thumping the large oak table, and making the glasses near him jump again.

"That's not me, is it, Ralph?"—and Mrs. Roberts looked in her husband's face so coaxingly that it recalled Ralph back to that enviable condition of temperament so habitual to him—peace and cheerfulness.

When the miller responded to his wife's good-tempered looks, it was evident to those who watched them, that they were a pair of unsophisticated lovers, as well as man and wife. Yes, between the miller and his wife there was nothing but the "pure idolatry" of love, of that happy, homely, devoted character, that made it delightful to contemplate. The mill, his wife and daughter, were all the world to Ralph—and the mill, her husband and daughter, were all the world to Ralph's wife. Their very snarls had the music of love in them, and without their knowing it, perhaps, were often got up that they might enjoy the sweetness of reconciliation,—and, ah! how sweet reconciliation is with those we love, after discord or estrangement—to renew with each other a new lease of affection. They would feign have kissed each other, even now; but there were too many eyes on them, and they contented their emotions with patting each other's rosy cheeks.

But besides the rare affection they possessed for each other, they had made themselves beloved by all who knew them, and by none more than the very poor—the halt, the lame, and the blind. They had hearts that "could feel for another;" and it was the pleasing task of both to "dry the mourner's tears." Ralph has often and often hailed the wanderer from the road, amid the blasts of night, and entertained him at his own kitchen hearth, and made the outcast once more feel his humanity, by fraternity and kindness. Ralph never gave a crust to the hungry with one hand, and slammed the door with the other. No—it was "come

in lad, and have what's going, along with me and my missus—" and then a pipe, and a shake-down till morning—then a good breakfast, a silver coin, and a good word, and the beggar went his way rejoicing. "He who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord," was more than a dry text to Ralph—it was his daily practice. In this Christian office the miller was heartily seconded by his wife. She would dandle the beggar's child upon her knee, and feed it, and comfort it, until it crowed again.

What if Ralph did wear his slouched hat in a very independent manner, on one side of his head? and when work was over, thrust his hands in his pockets, and rattle up his cash—and boast a trifle of the money he had accumulated?—those little outbursts of pomposity did no harm to anyone, and if they gratified the man, who would be mean enough to censure so true-hearted a fellow as the miller, for such frailties as these?

What a great moral difference between Ralph and his wife, and that worldly, designing pair coquetting with each other at the cross table, over a plate of blooming peaches. Mr. Burchell had decorated his coat with a dark-red rose from Sir William's garden, and the charming widow Sargood wore a white one in her elegantly dressed hair. Rings of amethyst, ruby, diamond, and sapphire, set in exquisite workmanship of golden hoops, adorned each finger, and set her hands a-glow with sparkling light. But her beauty dazzled more than all; and while every one who saw her made confession of her wondrous charms, none were ever more smitten by them than Josiah Burchell, that boasted "man of the world, sir!"

Yes, he was smitten—that is, as far as his eye was concerned. Josiah Burchell was "too wise, sir, to allow any woman to take possession of his heart! A man who gives himself up to the government of the heart, sir, is a man utterly lost! There was a time when he went a-courting with the heart,

sir; but he didn't mean to be such an imbecile again. There was a time when his heart had the governing voice in all his transactions; but it had robbed him of a forest of freeholds, and left him a beggar, sir."

Well, then, as far as his eye was concerned, Mr. Burchell had conceived a deep admiration for Mrs. Sargood; but he had locked, barred, and bolted his heart against any such innovations. He loved her with his eye only, and fondly trusted that she had plenty of money.

Now, to the pursuit of money, the widow Sargood was also committed; and plainly seeing that she had made an easy conquest of Mr. Burchell, her thoughts were alone occupied in divining whether or not he was a monied man. It was some encouragement to her hopes that he was on such close terms with Sir William Raymond; for surely Sir William would not be in such intimate association with any who were not rich? Mrs. Sargood, like too many other people, were apt to estimate the character of others by her own, and so she thought that Sir William was a hollow-hearted a money-grub as herself. Her low standard of mankind, however much the gauge applied to her London circle of here-to-day and gone-to-morrow people, was wholly inoperative to measure the character of Sir William by. His intellect, and his virtues, towered far beyond the view of this worldly, hollow-hearted woman. He had a soul beyond money. He, too, judged of others by himself, and therefore mankind came before him in a fairer aspect than they did in the view of either Mr. Burchell or she whose beauty so much charmed him. Nor was Sir William blind either to the frailties of those he knew; but he had the good sense to look upon them with an eye of pity, and with mercy, and with charity beheld them.

Sir William liked Mr. Burchell more for his daughter's sake than his own. He knew, too, that the

heart of Eustace was bound to Amy, and the good father was concerned — deeply concerned — that they should be closer knit by marriage, and then leave them to “fondly love on to the close.”

The miller, after a little while, and after drinking the good health of his landlord and all present, expressed himself somewhat anxious to know how Judith was getting on—she who now lay in the cold embrace of death; and he thought it time, too, that the school-children should be marshalled to their homes; and as, in Mr. Shaw's absence, he intended to take upon himself the office of schoolmaster, he, for these reasons, begged Sir William to allow him to wend his way homeward. The parting glass went round, and then the spacious hall was soon cleared of the guests, except Mr. Burchell and Mrs. Sargood. Sir William, for awhile—much to his friend Burchell's satisfaction (would it be a breach of confidence to say, Mrs. Sargood's also?)—withdrew with Melville, his steward, to talk over the mysterious and unhappy events of the day, which, in truth, he was very glad had been brought to an end. Had it not been for the sad condition of Eustace, Sir William would have kept the table in a roar with his jest, anecdote, and his healthy flow of animal spirits, and would have been the first to have led the dance in the lawn with the simple-minded miller's daughter. But, alas! Sir William had no heart for merry-making now, and had it not been for the traditions of his family, he would have let the heir's birthday pass without the ringing of the joy-bells, without the assembling of friends. As it was, the old gentleman did his very best to conceal that which hung heavy at his heart, and inspire his guests with those feelings of geniality which should reign at a feast. But it must be confessed that it was but a mimicking of joy and pleasure: so thin, indeed, was the texture of the veil, so artificial the mask, that the pile of gloom could be seen behind. Sir William made

but a poor deceiver, and was a sorry player of a part in which his heart had no concern.

He began to grow weary at the long absence of his son, and marvelled what could detain him, as he strayed from room to room with his old and faithful steward. But he would soon be in possession of great news, both good and bad; he would have the bright satisfaction of seeing Eustace and Amy lovers again, and he would have to learn that his eldest-born died with the red brand of Cain upon him.

As we have seen and said, Mr. Burchell and the widow were alone, and they made the best use of the opportunity, as they sat side by side over an abundant supply of fruits and wines.

“Now, look here, Mrs. Sargood,” began Mr. Burchell, throwing his chair back on its hind legs, while he crossed one of his legs over the other as he sat with his thumbs thrust in the armholes of his waistcoat, while his white silk handkerchief carelessly hung across his lap—“look here, madam, in all I say, think, or do, I endeavour to be a man of business. I like to be short, sharp, decisive, in all I undertake, whether it be balancing an account or making a declaration of love.”

“Love and accounts! what odd things to connect together!” cried the widow, laughing.

“So they are, madam, and very serious things, too, if you find your love rejected, and the balance against you in the account.”

“Love is a folly that we are only committed to once in our lives; but those bothering accounts come to be balanced every day.”

“Oh, that's easily done by tact and method.”

“That I do not clearly see. To balance an account against you, you must pay it.”

“Not at all, madam, not at all. By all means pay it if you can, if not carry it forward.”

“I apprehend. But in the next settlement, the balance is augmented in the favour of your creditor—what then?”

"Still carry forward," said Mr. Burchell, who only wanted a quill behind his ear to impress anyone who saw his manners, and heard his commercial phraseology, with the belief that Mr. Burchell had forgotten himself, and that he was under the delusion that he was transacting business with a creditor, within the precincts of the counting-house.

Now the widow, who knew very well she was always practically following Mr. Burchell's convenient method of "carrying forward" balances against herself, still pushed the clever man of business for a solution of an extreme case in his principles of bookkeeping.

"But you cannot with grace 'carry forward' a third time," she suggested.

"Not with grace, madam, but with tact you may," rejoined Mr. Burchell, poising a peach on the top of a silver fruit knife.

"But still a 'settling day' must come, and not all the tact in the world can postpone it. Creditors won't forbear for ever, Mr. Burchell."

"Well, some there are foolish enough to do that. Yet I won't call them foolish, either—for, surely, it is better to wait in hope than to wind up and get nothing. But clever trading is a great art, and none but men of intellect should engage in it."

"Intellect is a fine thing, but £ s. d. is better," said Mrs. Sargood, looking at her watch, which was a curiosity for its diminutiveness.

"Oh, I grant you that madam," replied Mr. Burchell, with considerable gravity of tone and countenance. "Yet a keen intellect will always command money—"

"By 'carrying forward,'" remarked the widow, significantly.

"That seems to amuse you, madam. You may rely upon it, however, that 'carrying forward' is the correct principle to follow, by those who cannot settle a balance in cash."

"But there are still some ob-

stinate creditors who decidedly object to the principle of 'carrying forward.' How then?"

"Have no consideration for such intractable people. Give them a cheque on the Bank in Basinghall Street,—it is sure to be honoured there, and a settlement effected without the passage of money. Ha! ha!"

"I have heard of that bank, but I never opened an account there."

"A very useful institution, madam, to those who have no money. Quite a sanctuary, I assure you, to those who have unmanageable creditors to deal with."

"Oh, you must be theorising, sir."

"No, madam, I am speaking experimentally—I have had to try it."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, it is part and parcel of the training of a man of the world to make himself acquainted with all the institutions of his country. A man may be rich, you know, even while he stands bankrupt before the world."

"Impossible!"

"Nothing easier to a man of tact, madam. Had I a case before me I would enlighten you as to the necessary process to go through to save all and pay nothing."

Mrs. Sargood looked as if a new light had broken in upon her. She flattered herself that she knew a great deal of the world, but she acknowledged to herself that she did not know how to pay her debts, and yet preserve the property she had. She had a mind to confide her circumstances to Mr. Burchell, for he spoke so confidently, and his assertions were of that tempting character to any one who was in debt, had property, and did not care very much about that sort of thing called "honesty." But her caution forbade any precipitated action until she had made further acquaintance with the man and his schemes.

"Now, Mrs. Sargood, if you will give me a case I will reveal my system," said Mr. Burchell.

"I cannot at this moment. I suppose chieane would be an element in the transaction?"

"How can that be while you have the lynx-eyed law for an investigator?"

"Lying, then?"

"Look here, madam," said Mr. Burchell, evading to answer the question in a more direct manner, "a man in monetary difficulties is doing battle with his creditors. They are doing whatever they can to overthrow him, and he must be a fool to stop to consider the reputation of the weapons he uses if they serve to defend him."

This allegorical speaking was plain enough to Mrs. Sargood, who, when she understood by it that Mr. Burchell justified cheating and lying to defraud creditors, hit the truth of his meaning; and she was set a-wondering how a man with such roguish principles could have wormed himself into association with Sir William Raymond. She looked at her little monitor again, and declared that she must take her departure.

"I very much regret, Mrs. Sargood, I should have detained you so long listening to me upon such a prosy subject as bankruptcy—a subject that concerns neither you nor I. It is not often I am caught making such a divergence from the true object I had in view. It is not business, and any deviation, madam, from the wholesome discipline of business is a blunder that never leads to success."

"No apology, sir, I pray. Your conversation has been very refreshing. I certainly was in hopes that you were going to be kind enough to afford me more information about those missing deeds of mine, which I would give anything to recover."

"Would you give your hand, madam?"

"Sir!"

"Yes, Mrs. Sargood, would you give your hand for the deeds of your freeholds?"

"That would depend upon who asked for so small a reward," replied the widow, after a slight hesitation.

"What if I asked it? Look here, Mrs. Sargood—our acquaint-

ance is very young; but a man of business should be able to make up his mind without dawdling over a subject."

"I do not quite comprehend you, sir."

"To be plain, then, madam, I greatly admire your beauty."

"Fie! Mr. Burchell, for flattering! I am not accessible to it. But I really must go now, except you have any further information to give me of those deeds."

"I have, madam. Those deeds are in my possession!"

The widow stared in wonderment. "Are you in jest or earnest, Mr. Burchell?"

"In downright earnest, Mrs. Sargood. Those deeds are in my possession," he reiterated.

"I dare not entertain such joy, without more assurance than a stranger's word for it. Give me the deeds!"

"Will you take me with them?"

"Give me the deeds, sir—they are mine."

"Not so, dear madam. My lips have revealed good news to you; let me be rewarded with some comfort from yours."

"I can speak of nothing, sir, until I see the deeds."

"Pardon me a minute, and I will gratify you," he said, and left the hall in search of his portmanteau, then returned with the parchments.

"There, dear madam; is that confirmation strong enough of my word?" he asked, as he held the documents up before the widow's astonished eyes.

"Thank Heaven!" fervently exclaimed the delighted widow.

"Now I can meet my creditors."

"Creditors, Mrs. Sargood! Surely you would not be foolish enough to realise these freeholds to pay creditors? Better the deeds had never been discovered than so disposed of."

"I am grateful for the opportunity those deeds afford me of paying my debts; yet I confess I shall be sorry to part with my freeholds."

"It is not to be thought of!" said Mr. Burchell, emphatically.

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature. Learn wisdom from my folly. I was once foolish enough to dispose of a whole forest of freeholds to pay debts; but that was one of the sins of my youth; a folly that savoured strongly of brown-holland pinafores. Fancy, dear madam, what a honest fool I must have been, to sell valuable property to discount three thousand pounds' worth of bills accepted by that scoundrel, Major Bevington!"

"And that money, I have no doubt now, Mr. Burchell, I have had the benefit of. When I realise on those deeds, that three thousand pounds shall be repaid to you."

"Not a word of such a thing, dear madam! I only wish the whole of my fortune had been bestowed on you—you whose distinguished charms——"

"Mr. Burchell!" cried the widow, in accents of affected displeasure, while she withdrew her hand that the lover, in the moment of his rapture, had seized. A slight pause ensued, while they looked earnestly at each other—the widow with her bright eye laden with pride and reproof, and Mr. Burchell with a look more of boldness than love.

"Have patience with me, dear madam."

"You must, please, change the subject, then, for I really cannot sit and listen to flatteries which, even when I was 'sweet seventeen,' never beguiled me. He! he! to think of an old widow like me to be called 'charming!' I really thought, Mr. Burchell, that you were more of a man of business than that."

"Ah! Mrs. Sargood, men of business have eyes to see, and none are more keenly alive to beauty. And they have hearts, too, that are led captive by it. But men of business are not prone to linger; when a thing is to be done that ought to be done, they do not sigh and suffer over it, but advance at once to their purpose, with hearts prepared for any fate. Dear madam, our acquaintance has been of the

briefest, but it did not require time to discover your intellect or your beauty."

"Oh, fie, Mr. Burchell! Whatever would your daughter say?"

"Men of business, madam, are only the slaves of their own feelings, not of others. But to the point, Mrs. Sargood. I am quite willing to take upon myself all your debts, if you will take me for your husband——"

"Oh! Mr. Burchell, I am sure you would not do me so much honour if you knew what an extravagant woman I was."

"Dear madam, I have plenty of means, and shall only be too happy to place them at your disposal. My daughter will soon be mistress of Sir William Raymond's estate——"

"But how will you be the better for that?"

"Thus: she and her husband will be too much taken up with the sentimentalities of life, rather than its substantial business, and the whole management of this wealthy estate will pass under my control; and I should manage it for the pleasure and benefit of ourselves. Virtually it would be our estate, for the young couple would be only too happy to carry on 'love in a cottage.' I am frankly unfolding my plans to you, to show you that I have my wits about me——"

"I never doubted that, sir."

"Well, well; that is just the way I intend playing my cards, and I implore you to take a hand with me. There will be no end of the wealth that I shall bring you as your husband. Then I have five thousand pounds now at my disposal." Mr. Burchell here referred to the legacy left Amy by Robert Raymond, and which she declined to receive, so the father—man of business as he was, reckoned upon it for himself. "I mention these facts to you to assure you that you need be under no fear but that I shall have an abundance of income to cope with any expenditure you may please to indulge in. Say, dear madam, that you accept my proposal?"

"You really must 'carry it for-

ward'—for a little consideration," said the widow with an acquiescent smile.

"Dear Mrs. Sargood, this is an account that cannot be carried forward. It is inexorable, and stands for immediate settlement. Say you will be mine!"

The widow feigned reluctance to give her acceptance. She heaved a sigh, and cast her beauteous eyes reflectively to the ground, while one hand, of course by accident, was outstretched upon the table, and quite within reach of Mr. Burchell to take it if he would. He did take it in his, and reiterated—"Say you will be mine!"

"Oh, I cannot determine so serious a proposal to-night."

"Oh, yes, to-night! now!"

"My debts, sir——"

"Think only of me," said Mr. Burchell, kissing the hand he held. "Directly I become your husband, and you Mrs. Burchell, your debts are mine."

"But how will you deal with them? They cannot be 'carried forward' any longer. They must be paid."

"And so they shall—in my way.

Let them no longer trouble you—let not so insignificant a matter——"

"You know not the extent of my embarrassments."

"Nor do I care to know, dear madam. The larger they are, the easier to deal with. Their settlement will neither break my heart nor my bank. Trouble no farther, dear lady; but permit me to hold this hand, to kiss that cheek, as an avowal of your acceptance."

The widow made no objections to her lover suiting the action to the word, and then the engagement between the two, to become man and wife, was made.

"Whatever shall I say to Major Bevington to-morrow?"

"I will meet him for you, love—and take a horse-whip for my companion," said Mr Burchell.

"Heigho! I fear you have done a foolish thing, sir. But there—you would," said the widow.

"This is the proudest moment of my life, which can only be out-rivalled by another; and that is when at the altar I place a ring upon this dear little finger."

KEEPING THE HEART YOUNG.

I do not know whether the title that I have chosen for this paper be sufficiently explanatory or not. Should the latter unfortunately be the case, I must only trust to the gradual elucidation of my meaning in the course of the subsequent remarks; and yet when I remember the very prominent part which, at least according to popular speech, the human heart plays in life,—how it sinks at misfortune, and rises with prosperity; how it grows cold and stands still with fear; and how, in extreme cases, it has been reported to turn round and jump with surprise, I cannot help hoping that there is nothing singular in applying the words old and young to such an active and independent organ. This much I know, that, singular or not as the terms may be, well is it for that individual who, through the hurry and wear of life, its hardening contacts and chilling influences, has preserved that freshness of spirit, that ready enjoyment of small pleasures, and that kindly sympathy in their enjoyment by others, which constitutes him a professor of the beautiful, but too rare art, “of keeping the heart young.” But without further preface, let me address myself to my subject.

Some people believe and assert that childhood is the happiest period of life; others maintain that its troubles more than outbalance its delights, and that the real enjoyment of existence is best known to the adult. Both these opinions seem to me far too sweeping and absolute; a truer verdict would be, that each season has its special pleasures, each its special pains; and that while, as a matter of course, certain portions of their experience are alike, others are not only dissimilar, but actually incompatible. The soft, fresh green of spring, its buds and blossoms, must change or pass away before the mature fruitage of autumn can

be gathered in—a truth, as regards the outer world of nature, which aptly symbolises a like verity in the inner world of man’s heart.

Freedom from care, that is, continuous care; exuberance of health and strength, and imagination,—these are the prerogatives of childhood; blessings, the absence of which is so undreamt of that their presence is but lightly appreciated. We need but to look back on our own past days to learn how to fill up the picture;—on the country walks between hedges teeming with beauty and wonder; on the wayside brook running so merrily along, and bearing a straw so bravely through rapids and whirlpools, and over steep descents that made us tremble with delicious terror for our frail venture; on the wild, impossible schemes, seeming so possible then, that filled up every spare moment of our time, and would have kept us awake all night, had not nature stoutly defended us from such a catastrophe; on the strange dreams and fancies, so vague and so delightful, that had power to transform the commonest, most familiar spot of ground, into fairy-land, and make us free of its teeming marvels.

But as years went on the scene altered. The soft mists of sunrise faded from the earth, and the cold, practical details of every-day life were revealed. We left off dreaming, and began to think; we ceased from play, and took up our appointed task; and hardest, saddest part of all, we learnt to plan, and doubt, and fear,—we who had hitherto been content to sport along, and let affairs shape themselves at their own sweet will! These were, and are, necessary changes. The light-heartedness of boyhood and girlhood, its absorption in the present, and forgetfulness of the future, would ill assimilate with the duties and responsibilities of manhood and woman-

hood; but while admitting this truth, and accepting as our inevitable portion the sobered aspect of life incident to our age, I would appeal to all who, like myself, have bidden farewell for ever to childhood, and ask why we should go beyond what is required of us, and give up, not only those things that must slip from our grasp, but also those that, if so minded, we might retain to our latest day? Life is too full of shade to dispense with even the slenderest gleam of brightness within its compass, and though we may have lost—

“Many a pleasure

Many a hope, and many a power,”

let us be wise enough, because humble enough, to avail ourselves of every fraction of happiness that may lie in our path; let us, so far as we can, be children still, in the enjoyment of those simple, every-day delights that once formed the sum total of our desires.

What these delights are is a question that each must answer for him or herself. Tastes differ as faces do; and no one, in this matter at least, can lay down rules for his neighbour. There is, however, one point in which all must agree, one faculty the possession of which is absolutely necessary—the faculty that will enable us to put aside, for the time being, our private cares, and trials, and anxieties, and, as it were, lose ourselves in the intense realisation of the present moment. A country walk; a day by the sea side; the sudden thrill that goes through the frame at the first evidence of the approaching spring,—these, and such as these, are enjoyments that can be appreciated only by those who have thus succeeded in keeping their hearts young.

But it is not merely with a view to our own individual advantage that I would advocate my present theme; the interests of a large class of the community are so closely bound up with it that I must briefly, certainly, but with all due earnestness, allude to their claims—claims only too often and too utterly disregarded by sundry of their elders and betters,

who, having managed to outgrow all recollections of their own youth, expect everyone to be as wise as their own sedate and respectable selves.

Now I candidly admit, that when taking a walk I decidedly prefer the smooth and level road to the top of the hedge. I cannot, look at the subject as I may, believe that a wild scramble along a rugged and uncertain ridge, however elevated and picturesque, can be preferable to the clear path along which I can stroll, free to pursue my thoughts at will; and yet, to my young companions, if I be happy enough to have any, my view of the matter is absolutely incredible;—the top of the hedge for them! And as I look at them, rapturously balancing along, a flash of the past comes over me, and I remember that there was a time, far enough away now, when I, too, should have been as ambitious, and have taken my place there as eagerly as any. Why, then, should I arrogantly call them down, and deprive them of the little touch of pleasure within their reach?

I wonder how many of us, the grown-up ones, know what desolation fills a child's heart when a long-planned excursion is put a stop to by bad weather? We, well intrenched in our wisdom, can turn to our regular resources,—to our books, our work, our essays; while they, poor little ones! lean their heads against the window-frame, vainly searching for the smallest morsel of blue sky, and trembling lest the dreaded word “lessons” may be uttered behind them. We know that the pleasure has only been put off; to them “put off” is synonymous with “lost,” “gone for ever.” Can we, then, find it in our hearts to be “surprised at them,” according to the phrase current in some households; or should we not rather turn back in thought to our own early disregard of wet grass and dripping skies, and similar trifles, and bear gently with their small, rebellious, and almost laughable despair.

But it is time for me to draw these desultory remarks to a conclusion. While putting them down, I have again and again wished that I could place my meaning in a more earnest and forcible manner before those whom I have thus ventured to address. It is vain to desire what cannot be attained; yet the subject I have chosen has for so many years lain near my heart that I long to interest others in it. A few more words and I have done.

As I have said before, we have bidden farewell for ever to childhood, and have entered upon the dignities and penalties of the succeeding stage of existence. We have learnt, most of us, no doubt, by direct experience, what care and sorrow are. To many amongst us has come that day, silently remembered, though never spoken of, that separates us once and for ever from the past, that sets its mark of change, or loss, or death, or some such bitter knowledge, upon our hearts, and forbids us ever to feel the same again; for though—

“Our outer man has rallied,
And our heart and voice grown bold,
Yet the sphinx of life stands pallid
With her saddest secret told.
Happy places have grown holy;
If we went where once we went,
Only tears would fall down slowly,
As at solemn sacrament.
Merry books, once read for pastime,
If we dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
Would swim darkly up the brain.”

And yet we are young still. Before entering on, or, in many cases, nearing the middle stage of life, some of its shadows have fallen on our path never to pass away; something of its chill has cooled our blood; something of its gloom has dimmed our eyes; and these tokens

tell us only too surely of what awaits us on our onward course. We have received a warning,—shall we not avail ourselves of it?

Shall we not, with that simplicity which is true wisdom, retain everything of our past that can shed light on our present or our future?—every fresh feeling, every happy fancy, every grateful appreciation of the mystery and beauty of nature?—retain them for our own sake, for the sake of those around us, or under our control; and yet more for the sake of Him, who, while permitting in the scheme of His providence, sorrow and privation to press on our frail human hearts, yet scatters around us ameliorations and blessings that may well call forth our fervent gratitude? Shall we be unmindful of *these*? Shall we close our eyes, and shut our ears, and bury our souls in the dry dust of earthly cares, or shall we, walking along the path that He has cast up for us, accepting its trials, submitting to its losses, fulfilling its duties, bravely and patiently hold our spirits apart from injury and defilement, and through God's help and blessing, even to our latest day, carry within us a heart young and unworn as when it first leaped up to recognise a Divine hand in the glories of the material world; but strengthened and prepared to bow with far deeper, more adoring thanksgiving, albeit child-like, as of old, for the life-long guidance of a Father's care, the fast-approaching fruition of a Saviour's love, the blessed prospect of a nearing heaven, of which this beautiful world is, at its best and brightest, but a faint and faded foreshadowing?

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